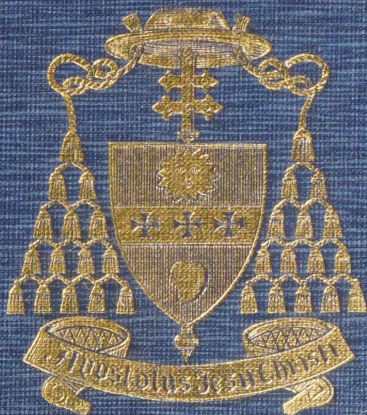


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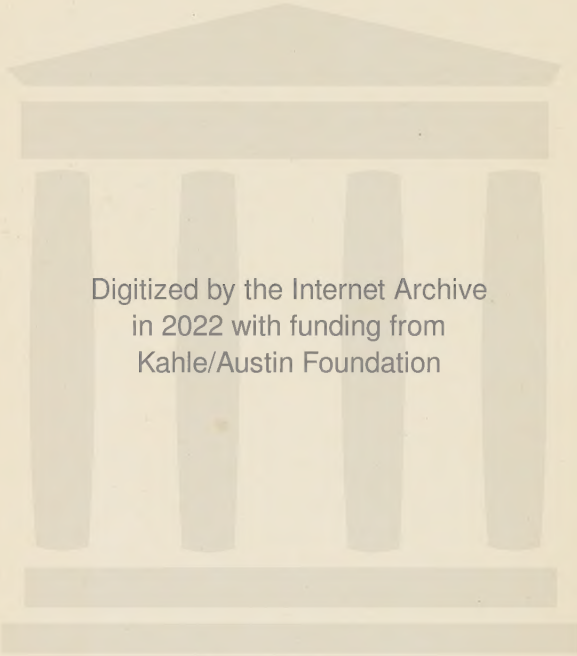
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*William D. McKitchen
American College
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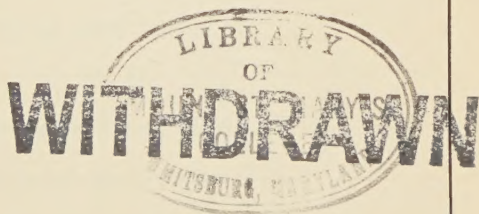
Cardinal Mercier's Retreat to his Priests

Translated from the French by

J. M. O'KAVANAGH

With a foreword by

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL GIBBONS,
ARCHBISHOP OF BALTIMORE.



PUBLISHED BY
CH. BEYAERT, BRUGES

1912

PIO X

DOMINICI GREGIS PASTORI SUPREMO
PATRI PISSIMO VIGILANTISSIMO
DESIDERATUS JOSEPHUS MERCIER
S. R. E. CARD. ET ARCHIEP. MECHLINIEN
COLLATIONES NOVEN
TEMPORE SECESSUS PROPOSITAS
ET IN GRATIAM PAROCHORUM
ALIORUMVE SUAE DIOECESIS SACERDOTUM
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PRIDIE IDUS SEXTILES MDCCCCIX
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DILECTO FILIO NOSTRO
DESIDERATO JOSEPHO S. R. E. PRESB.
CARD. MERCIER
ARCHIEPISCOPO MECHLINIENSI (MECHLINIAM)

PIUS P. P. X.

DILECTE FILI NOSTER,
SALUTEM ET APOSTOLICAM BENEDICTIONEM.

Perlibenter Nos, ut facile intelligis, accepimus, Clerum tuum hoc anno ad spiritualia Exercitia, in septem dispartitum coetus, vocatu tuo, omnem convenisse : teque sexis subinde eiusmodi coetibus non modo praesedis, verum concionatoris etiam egisse partes. Optimum id sane, sed laboriosum pastoralis diligentiae tuae munus : ad quod quidem exsequendum tuas corporis vires studio animi egregie respondisse, gratulamur. Eo magis, quod hi labores tui quin praeclaros tulerint communis utilitatis fructus, dubitari non licet : novimus pietatem, obsequium, industriam Cleri tui. Sed tamen Nos, ut eosdem fructus Deus multiplicet, precamur : cuius auspicem gratiae, simulque benevolentiae Nostrae singularis testem, tibi, Dilecte Fili Noster, et sacerdotibus omnibus, qui pio recessui vacarunt, Apostolicam benedictionem peramanter impertimus.

Datum Romae apud S. Petrum die X Septembris MCMVIII, Pontificatus Nostri anno sexto.

(s.) PIUS, P. P. X.

Dilecto filio Nostro Desiderato Iosepho Mercier
cardinali Archiepiscopo Mechlinensi ob egregios
ad fletum suum sermones habitos magnopere
gratulamur: quodque ipsos typis edendos, No-
bisque amantissime nuncupandos curaverit,
benivolentia et gratum profitemur animum.
Solemniter autem optantes, ut episcopali e-
iusdem sollicitudini omnes in sortem Domini
vocati fideles naviterque respondeant, Pastori
carissimo et dilecti oribus eius curae concreditae
Apostolicam Benedictionem intus cordi affectu
impertimus.

Ex Aedibus Vaticanis IV Idus Sextiles
Anno MCMIX.

Pius PP. X

A FOREWORD,
BY HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL GIBBONS,
ARCHBISHOP OF BALTIMORE.

A devoted Priest is the noblest work of God. In his formation the Divine Wisdom so operates as to be his efficient cause. In the beginning, God gives him a special vocation : « The Lord hath chosen you to stand before Him, and to minister to Him, and to worship Him, and to burn incense to Him » (Par. XXIX).

St. Paul declares that Christ Himself did not assume the dignity of High Priest till He was called by His Eternal Father. « No man taketh the honor to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was : so Christ also did not glorify Himself, that He might be made a High Priest, but He that said unto Him : Thou art My son, to-day have I begotten

Thee. » As He said also in another place : Thou art a Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech ». (Heb. V. 4. 6).

Beginning with the Divine Call, the Providence of God follows him through his early years, into his Seminary life, and finally leads him to the gate of the Sanctuary in order that his life energies may be placed as a holocaust on the altar. One who has so come to the Priesthood understands that he is a Priest, must be a Priest, and can be nothing else but a Priest, all the days of his life. As the water constitutes the ocean, so the Priesthood makes his character.

The entire *morale* of the Priesthood is found in the terse and almost inspired maxim, « *Sacerdos alter Christus* ». Jesus Christ lives and acts through the Priest for the regeneration of Society. All that the Church of Christ has done for the world in changing pagan ideas, in creating Christian civilization, in holding aloft the standards of morality, all this is the result of the work of the Catholic Priesthood.

Therefore the Priest must be in touch with humanity as Christ was.

The operation of the Priesthood in the world is like unto the myriad of springs that issue from the bosom of a fertile valley, and trickle down until they gather into rivulets, and then unite in the great streams that bring fertility to the low-lands. Dry up the springs and the rivulets, and the valley becomes an uninhabitable desert. The Priest is as necessary for Society and its regeneration as the soul is for the body. He diffuses through the arteries of the body politic healthy moral life. This may be one reason why a decadent Society reserves as the object of its special hatred and attack, the Priesthood of the Church.

In view of the paramount importance of the Nation's Priesthood, little wonder that great leaders in the Church have given their best attention to its cultivation. In this sense we deem Cardinal Mercier's « *Retraite Pastorale* » a most important book, and we are pleased to have the opportunity to present it, in its English dress, to the English speaking world. Innocence of life and integrity of moral character are the glory of the Priesthood, and an indispensable condition for the adequate fulfillment of its work. The standard-bearer of the Gospel should be conspi-

cuous for moral heroism, and his life should be the sweet perfume of the Doctrine that he preaches.

« Lord who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle, or who shall rest in Thy holy hill ? He that walketh without blemish, and worketh Justice — He that speaketh Truth in his heart, who hath not used deceit in his tongue, nor hath done evil to his neighbor, nor taken up a reproach against his neighbors ». (Ps. XIV-1-3).

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—

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of Our Most Holy Father, Pius X.
by Divine Providence Pope,
on the Fiftieth Anniversary of his Priesthood. III

ERRATA.

- page 21 — 9th *line* read power is made perfect.
- » 24 — 5th » *from foot read* through.
- » 28 — 8th » *read* Friday.
- » 35 — 12th » *from foot read* : cleansing.
- » 38 — 10th » *read* Himself.
- » 48 — 4th » *from foot read* in *for* if.
- » 64 — 5th » » » civilisations that have vanished.
- » 109 — 11th *line from foot read* books *for* bocks.
- » 162 — 10th » *read* it *for* is.
- » 182 — 6th » » to all men : instructing etc.
- » 197 — 7th » *from foot read* work *for* worketh.
- » 198 — 2nd » *read* addressing Himself to His beloved people says to them etc.
- » 224 — 10th *line from foot read* disdain *for* distain.
- » 241 — 3rd » *from foot read* : all the precepts and all etc.
- » 266 — 15th » *read* divined.
- » 278 — 11th » *from foot read* latter *for* later.
- » 293 — 3rd » *read* life *for* live.
- » 296 — 2nd » *from foot read* children,
- » 299 — *note 2, read* Ibid *for* here.
- » 328 *line 14 read* : he adds.
- » 340 » 4 » aught *for* ought.
- » 341 *last line* » a bondage to trifles.
- » 342 *line 16* » or wavers.
- » 358 » 9 » and no brother-priest

CARDINAL MERCIER'S RETREAT

TO HIS PRIESTS.

Introduction.

My dear brothers, among the models and masters of the priestly life and apostolate, is there any one who by the charm and the soundness of his doctrine, and by his suitability to the present conditions of our ministry, deserves our veneration and our earnest study like the pious, gentle, strong, and wise Bishop of Geneva, St. Francis de Sales ? As preacher, controversialist, writer and missionary, he has undeniably proved in his own person the possibility of combining unreserved devotion to the service of our neighbour with a wholly interior life, a life spent in that atmosphere of faith and charity where the soul can converse freely and constantly with God. Take the *Life of St. Francis de Sales* by Hamon ¹, and read

¹ The contents of Book VII. are as follows : — Natural character of St. Francis de Sales. — Means by which he acquired holiness. — His faith. — His love for God. — His conformity to the Will of God. — His spirit of religion. — His devotion to Christ and His saints. — His charity towards his neighbour. — His gentleness. — His zeal. — His prudence and simplicity. — His modesty. — His humility. — His spirit of poverty. — His mortification. — His patience. — His equanimity. — The universal veneration of which he was the object during

Book VII. of the second volume. There you will see in practice all the virtues that should adorn the ministry of a bishop or a priest and ensure its supernatural efficacy.

Then meditate on the holy bishop's *Treatise on the Love of God* : there you will see the road that leads from the first stages of asceticism to the heights of mystical union with God.

You will also find in it this passage, indicating the line that a Retreat for the clergy ought to take, and the fruits its hearers are expected to derive therefrom : « Every one should make a good retreat from time to time, in order to arouse himself; by spiritual exercises, to attempt a complete re-ordering of his life, and to take a strong and earnest resolution to live entirely for God ¹ ».

The Statutes of our diocese ordain that its priests make a retreat every year, either privately or in common. Circumstances fortunately enable us to procure for you henceforward — to your own general satisfaction — an annual retreat in common. We feel that we are only complying with your wishes, dear and devoted Brethren, by publishing the main develop-

his life and after his death. — Miracles by which God made known his holiness to the world. — His canonisation.

¹ *Treatise on the Love of God*. XII. 8.

ments of the themes upon which we dwelt in the retreat we had the happiness of preaching to you in August and September, 1908. Certain conferences of an exclusively practical and confidential nature, which we then gave you, will not be found in this volume. We shall perhaps find an opportunity some day, God willing, to insert them, in the form of *Conversations with our Clergy*, in a little treatise we have in our mind, upon the subject of *Pastoral Work*.

AN INTRODUCTION, which we have entitled *An Interchange of Confidences*¹, determines the relative positions of the bishop who preaches the Retreat and the Priests who are come to hear him. It forms the subject of our First Discourse.

Then the RETREAT itself comprises the development of the following main ideas :

The preparation of the Soul.

The complete Re-ordering of Life.

The Self-oblation of the Christian Soul to God.

The consecration of the Priest to God Alone.

In the CONCLUSION, we deal with the Means of Perseverance.

a) The lecture on *The Preparation of the Soul* has for its object the right use of the Retreat, what ought to occupy us during these days, and on what condi-

¹ « Échangeons nos Sentiments ».

tions our Retreat will be fruitful in good results. (2nd Discourse).

b) The subject of *The Moral and Religious Reformation of Life* comprises three discourses : I. The Orientation of our Lives, (2nd Discourse) ; II. Death and the Great Alternative (4th Discourse) ; III. Sin in the Soul of a Priest (5th Discourse).

After the exercitant has renounced sin, turned himself to God, fixed his attention on his eternal interests, imploring the Divine Mercy and pardon for his failings, he must give himself over *positively* to God, making— in the words of St. Francis de Sales,— « an earnest, steadfast resolution to live henceforth wholly for God alone ». He owes this to God as a Christian ; he owes it as a Priest.

c) *The Self-Oblation of the Christian Soul to God* is the subject of the 6th Discourse : Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

d) *The Consecration of the Priest to God Alone* is treated in two discourses : I. *The Mission of the Priest as Representative of Mankind before God*, (7th Discourse) ; II. *The Mission of the Priest as God's Messenger to Man*. (8th Discourse).

e) The CONCLUSION (9th Discourse) considers the question : *Shall we persevere ?* We endeavour here to give expression to the feelings of peace and joy, and generous, grateful goodwill, that all experience

at the close of a retreat, even though the anticipation of the retreat may have been unwelcome and unpleasant. We recall once more the chief means of securing firmness for the resolutions we have taken : the spirit of which is so admirably expressed in the « Clerical Vows, » which we all solemnly renew together at the close of the retreat : « *The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup : it is thou that will restore my inheritance to me* ¹. » It is Thou, O my God, who art my only treasure and the sole object of my love. Thou alone art powerful and good enough to establish my soul securely in the abiding possession of the precious gifts she has received from Thy bountiful hands.

During the course of the retreat we received the magnificent *Exhortation to the Catholic Clergy*, addressed by our beloved Pontiff to the bishops and priests of the whole world on the occasion of their celebrating the Golden Jubilee of his Priesthood. We earnestly entreat you to read and meditate on this precious document — which, for your convenience, we include in the present volume. May its lessons, coming as they do from our Supreme Teacher on Earth, our

¹ *Dominus pars haereditatis meae et calicis mei ; tu es qui restitues haereditatem meam mihi. Ps. XV. 5.*

Holy Father Pius X, with his divinely enlightened solicitude for us, and his loving-kindness towards us, penetrate ever more and more deeply into our inner lives, and render ever more fruitful our pastoral labours among those committed to our charge !

† D. J. Card. MERCIER.

Archb. of Mechlin.

June 29, 1909, Feast of the Apostles
SS. Peter and Paul.

FIRST DISCOURSE.

An Interchange of Confidences.

FIRST DISCOURSE.

AN INTERCHANGE OF CONFIDENCES.

*Venite seorsum in desertum
locum et requiescite pusillum.*

Come apart into a desert
place, and rest a little. St.
Mark, VI, 31.

I.

My Dear Brothers, the prospect of spending a few days in your midst is to me a source of genuine pleasure, for you more than all others are habitually present to my thoughts. Nor need this surprise you : for are you not my divinely appointed fellow-labourers in the vineyard of the Lord ? At the command of the Most High, Moses chose from amongst all the children of Israel seventy counsellors whose duty it was to help by their experience the legislator of the people of God. You, priests of the Catholic Church, observes the Roman Pontifical, are the members of the Council thus prefigured in the Old Law. But you will be so in truth only in so far as you are willing, under the vivifying action of the Holy Spirit who bestows His seven-fold gift upon you, to keep the Decalogue of the Law, and to prove by your know-

ledge and your works the wisdom of your minds and the rectitude of your hearts ¹.

At the dawn of the New Dispensation Our Divine Saviour in like manner selected seventy-two disciples who were to go before Himself and His Apostles wherever these purposed to preach the Gospel. Once more, it is you who were prefigured in the choice of these seventy-two. And the disciples went forth in pairs : symbolizing thus the faith and good works which ministers of the Gospel are to carry to perfection in their teaching and in their lives ; or again, the twofold love, for God and for their neighbour, in which their souls must be deeply and firmly rooted ².

Let it then be your aim, dear Brothers, to show that with God's grace you are worthy of the rôle of *helpers*, to which you also are called as were the advisers of Moses and the first disciples of Christ : worthy to take your stand by the side of your

¹ *Vos siquidem in septuaginta viris et senibus signati estis ; si per spiritum septiformem, Decalogum legis custodientes, probi et maturi in scientia similiter et opere critis.* — Pont. Rom., De Ordinatione Presbyteri.

² « *Sub eodem quoque mysterio, et eadem figura in novo Testamento Dominus septuaginta duos elegit, ac binos ante se in praedicationem misit ; ut doceret verbo simul, et facto, ministros Ecclesiae suae, fide et opere debere esse perfectos ; seu geminae dilectionis, Dei scilicet et proximi, virtute fundatos.* ».

bishops, who are for you the representatives of Moses and of the Twelve chosen by Christ ¹.

I said to you just now that my thoughts turn towards you habitually and spontaneously. Every task that confronts me, every labour that demands my zeal, brings with it a keen feeling that unaided I can do but little. So it is only natural that after invoking the help of God I should turn in spirit to you, reiterating the invitation of the Church to the levites whom she calls to the service of Her altars : « I beseech you to strive earnestly to be unto me true fellow-labourers » ².

Besides, is it not your experience that the heart when stirred, even a little, always yearns to confide to others the wishes, the fears, the hopes that arise daily within it ? And to whom can I confide such feelings, if not to you who are my friends by the right of your priestly state ? When towards the close of the Ordination ceremony I embrace the young priest, while receiving from him his promise of respect and obedience, I am always filled with a deep feeling of joy at the thought that I can offer him the same

¹ « *Tales itaque esse studeatis, ut in adjutorium Moysi, et duodecim apostolorum, episcoporum videlicet catholicorum, qui per Moysen et Apostolos figurantur, digne, per gratiam Dei, eligi valeatis.* »

² *Tales itaque esse studeatis, ut in adjutorium... episcoporum catholicorum... digne, per gratiam Dei, eligi valeatis.* »

assurances of friendship as Our Divine Saviour Himself vouchsafed to offer to His beloved Apostles : « I will not now call you servants, but friends ; because all things whatsoever I do among you are known to you ¹. »

In the same way will you, my dear Brothers, prove yourselves my friends if you are docile to the instructions you receive from me ².

If, during the few days we shall spend together, I can freely open my mind and confide to you my thoughts and wishes, and if you welcome them with the same feelings of confidence and zeal which prompt them, think you not that these will be happy days, and that our retreat will amply repay us for whatever effort it may cost us ?

You, my dear fellow-workers, should be able to model your lives upon mine ; and though I dare not apply to my own life, past or present, the confident words of St. Paul « Be ye followers of me as I also am of Christ ³ », yet this I do desire, that you read clearly the thoughts of my soul, and, by drawing

¹ *Jam non dicam vos servos, sed amicos meos, qui omnia cognovistis quae operatus sum in medio vestri, alleluia.* — Pont. Rom. de Ordin. Presb.

² *Vos amici mei estis, si feceritis quae ego praecipio vobis.* John XV. 14.

³ *Imitatores mei estote, sicut et ego Christi.*

near to your Pastor, see the sincerity and the earnestness of his desire to lead you all to holiness and happiness.

« O God, who art the pastor and the guide of all, look down with favour upon thy servant whom thou hast appointed to the see of Mechlin : grant him grace to further both by word and example the interests of those over whom he is placed, so that one day he may, together with the flock entrusted to him, attain to life eternal ¹. »

My duty here accords with my desire : in preaching to you I am lightening the burden I feel upon my own conscience.

Why, asks St. Hilary, did our Divine Saviour say to His apostles that they were the salt of the earth : « *Vos estis sal terrae* » ? And he answers : Because it is the mission of apostles to preach the things of heaven ; they are, so to speak, sowers of eternity : does not their word confer in some sort the privilege of incorruptibility on all that it touches ² ? »

¹ *Deus omnium fidelium pastor et rector, famulum tuum quem Ecclesiae Mechliniensi pracesse voluisti, propitius respice : da ei, quaesumus, verbo et exemplo, quibus praeest proficere, ut ad vitam una cum grege sibi credito perveniat sempiternam. »*

² *Apostoli autem sunt rerum coelestium praedicatores et aeternitatis velut satores, immortalitatem omnibus corporibus quibus eorum sermo aspersus fuerit conferentes.* (Comm. in Matth. Cap. IV. Cfr. Officium Confessorum Pontificum, 2^o loco, 8^o lectione.)

— And the word of Christ Himself is clear : « Going, therefore, teach ye all nations. -- *Euntes, ergo, docete omnes gentes* » ¹.

One of the first things done by the Council of Trent, after defining the Canon of the Sacred Scriptures, was to issue a Decree of Reform imposing on the bishops the twofold obligation of having the Scriptures expounded and interpreted to the faithful by their priests, and of preaching the Gospel themselves unless prevented by some legitimate reason from doing so ². Indeed the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is, according to the holy Council, their first and chief duty : « *praeceptum episcoporum munus* » ³.

¹ Matth. XXVIII, 19.

² *Sacrosancta Synodus.. ne coelestis ille sacrorum librorum thesaurus, quem Spiritus Sanctus summa liberalitate hominibus tradidit, neglectus jaceat, statuit et decrevit quod.... episcopi, archiepiscopi, primates, et alii locorum ordinarii eos praebendam... obtinent, ad ipsius sacrae scripturae expositionem et interpretationem.... cogant et compellant.* « Conc. Trid., Sess. V., Decretum de Reformatione, Cap. I.

³ *Quia vero christianae republicae, non minus necessaria est praedicatio Evangelii, quam lectio, et hoc est praeceptum episcoporum munus ; statuit et decrevit eadem sancta synodus, omnes episcopos, archiepiscopos, primates et omnes alios ecclesiarum praelatos teneri per se ipsos, si legitime impediti non fuerint, ad praedicandum sanctum Jesu Christi Evangelium.* Conc. Trid. Sess. V. Cap. II. Cfr. Sess. XXIV, Cap. IV.

In this way exactly did St. Charles Borromeo understand the obligations of his office. The Acts of the Third Provincial Council convened at Milan through his zealous initiative, contain a complete — nay, almost a minutely detailed — treatise on preaching ; and the holy Bishop, anxious to set an example to bishops and priests alike, reminds them of the exhortation of St. Paul to Timothy : « I charge thee before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, by his coming, and his kingdom : Preach the word ¹. » And from these instructions St. Charles concludes that of all the duties of the episcopal office, preaching, whether by word of mouth or by pastoral letters, is the most important and the most urgent ².

¹ *Testificor coram Deo et Jesu Christo, qui judicaturus est vivos et mortuos, per adventum ipsius et regnum ejus, prædica verbum.* ² Trim. IV, I.

² *Quibus ex verbis perspicuum plane sit... Verbis Dei prædicationem Episcopi esse munus præcipuum, idemque maxime necessarium. Toto igitur pectore in eam curam incumbentes, gregem sibi commissum tum per se ipsum tum per alios verbo Dei pascet... « ... Et vero quamquam Episcopus assiduus officii sui pastoralis laboribus, muneribusque occupatissimus, sæpe ad omnem populum sibi commissum concionem habere non potest : tamen tam veterem, atque adeo ab apostolicis usque temporibus derivatam rationem adhibere studebit, ut dioecesis suae populis a se distan-*

Leo XIII., in one of his masterly Encyclicals, *Sapientiae Christianae*, insists anew upon this fundamental consideration, that faith is propagated by the word ; and he adds : « Since therefore, faith is necessary for salvation, it follows that before all else, the Gospel of Christ must be preached. And the duty of preaching, which is the duty of teaching, is by Divine Law incumbent on those masters « whom the Holy Ghost hath placed » ¹ as bishops, to rule the church of God. »

Preaching, therefore, is by Divine Law the right and duty of bishops.

Quite recently our present Holy Father, Pope Pius X, referring to the necessity of checking the unrestrained and sometimes intemperate language of certain inexperienced priests, used these words to the Bishops of Italy : « You must be all the more attentive thereto, since the ministry of the word is yours and forms the chief duty of your office ; so much so indeed that when others exercise it, they do so in your name and place, and consequently on your responsibility » ².

tibus per litteras Pastorales aliquando concionetur. » — Actorum S. Mediolanensis Ecclesiae, Pars IV., Instructiones variae. Mediolani 1890.)

¹ Acts XX. 28.)

² « Il ministero della predicazione è tutto proprio di voi

I am not unmindful of these weighty lessons, my dear Brethren : I remember that it was not without a feeling of fear I heard the solemn questions put to me on the day of my consecration. The first of them was : *Will you teach both by word and example what you have learned from the Holy Scriptures to the people for whom you are about to be ordained ?* ¹ And my answer was : *I will — Volo.*

I do so now. God does not expect the impossible. Unable to reach all the sheep of my flock, I turn to you who will be the multipliers of your Bishop's words. When you leave this house each of you will return to the faithful of his parish, and he will say and repeat to them in the course of the year : « He who for you and for us alike is the living representative of Jesus Christ and

ed è parte precipua dell'ufficio episcopale ; e chiunque oltre di voi lo esercita, lo esercita in nome vostro ed in vostro luogo ; ond'è che resta sempre a voi di rispondere innanzi a Dio del modo col quale viene dispensato ai fedeli il pane della parola divina. » *Lett. encicl. di S. S. Papa Pio X agli Arcivescovi e Vescovi d'Italia, contro lo spirito d'insubordinazione e di indipendenza nel clero.*

¹ *Vis ea quae ex divinis scripturis intelligis, plebem cui ordinandus es et verbis docere et exemplis ?* — Pont. Rom., de Ord. Epise.

the authorized interpreter of his word, has told us what he expects of you and of us. We shall obey him, remembering that to hear our Bishop is to hear Jesus Christ. To despise his teaching would be to throw contempt on the Son of God Himself ; there can be no evasion of this, my brethren ; the God-Man has Himself declared it : ‘He that heareth my apostles heareth me ; he that despiseth my apostles despiseth me’.

Need I say it, my dear Fellow-Labourers ? Some have tried to dissuade me from preaching this retreat, to make me fear that the labour involved is beyond my strength. But for whom should I spend myself if not for my priests ? I know well that I must not tempt Providence, but I also know and confidently trust that grace will strengthen the weakness of nature.

There was, however, another and more serious difficulty that I feared : the fact, namely, that pastoral work comprises so many and varied interests with which I have never had much to do ; and I asked myself would it not be rash to offer advice to others on matters with which I am little acquainted myself... Then a consoling memory came to strengthen my will. I thought of the evening referred to in the Gospels, when five thousand men, thronging around Jesus, besought Him to

give them to eat. They had followed Him all day long, hungering after the words of life, but when evening came their strength failed them and they were in a desert place. Our Saviour, touched with compassion, turned to his disciples and bade them feed the multitude. « There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves, and two fishes », said Andrew, « but what are these among so many ? — *Quod hoc inter tantos* » ¹ ? Our divine Saviour does not stop to argue, but with the sublime simplicity of the All Powerful He answers : « Make the men sit down..., And Jesus took the loaves », says the evangelist », and..... he distributed to them.... » So abundant was the supply that after all had eaten, more food remained over than there had been at first.

No more than the disciples themselves have I anything of my own, O my Jesus, worth giving to those beloved priests who have thronged around me, hungering for the words of truth and grace, but I can draw upon the wealth of Him whose resources never fail : « who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old » ². I will say

¹ John VI, 9.

² *Qui profert de thesauro suo nova et vetera* ». — Matt. XIII, 53.

to them, not what may be the fruit of my own poor thought but what Thou hast given me grace to see and to hear, what I have gathered at the fountainhead which is the Word of Life : « That which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life, we declare unto you ¹. » I shall tell them what I think, in the depths of my own soul, about the present and the future of the priest's life ; what are our weak points, what the dangers that lie in our path, and the sources of supernatural help on which we can always draw ; I shall recall to their minds both the sublimity and responsibility of our common vocation ; and in doing this I shall not seek any aid from poor human eloquence, but shall be the simple interpreter of the word of God Himself.

To sustain my courage I meditated on the words addressed to me by the consecrating bishop at the solemn moment when, having conferred upon me the fulness of the priesthood, he was launching me on the high seas of the apostolic ministry : « Take the Gospel, go and preach it to the flock entrusted to thee : fear not, for God has power

¹ *Quod vidimus oculis nostris, quod audivimus, quod perspeximus, et manus nostrae contrectaverunt de Verbo vitae, annuntiamus vobis.* — I. Jo. I. 1-3.

to increase His grace in thee in proportion to thy needs ¹. » Were I not sustained by that promise I would not take a single step on the road that stretches out before me ; but on that promise I rely and it constitutes my strength. Never is a man more valiant than when, in the profound conviction of his own weakness he feels that he is unequal to the task laid upon him and must turn to God for help. Thus « power is made in infirmity ² » : the abundance of our strength comes from the knowledge of our weakness : we draw our inspiration at such moments from the spiritual practice of St. Ignatius of Loyola : « We act as if the result of our action depended on ourselves alone ; but at the same time we have recourse to God in prayer as if the result depended on Him alone. »

And indeed I can say now, writing these lines after the Retreat, that the result has justified the hopes I entertained when commencing. The close and holy intimacy these discourses afforded me for six weeks with the priests of my diocese, has filled me with a happiness such as I had not

¹ *Accipe evangelium et vade et praedica illud populo tibi commissio : potens est enim Deus ut augeat tibi gratiam suam.*

— Pont. Rom.

² *Virtus in infirmitate perficitur.* — II. Cor. XII, 9.

known before ; and it is with the deepest gratitude that I turn again to-day towards those whose respectful docility, piety and sincere affection secured that happiness for me. They will understand still better now than at the opening of the Retreat the feelings that prompted me to address them : as I also am more firmly convinced that the trust I reposed in them was not misplaced.

II.

St. Mark tells us how our Divine Saviour used to gather His apostles around Him to hear them give an account of their labours ; or was it not rather that the apostles themselves would come to their beloved Master, feeling the need of His sympathy and the comfort of confiding to Him all they had said and done ? — « And the apostles coming together unto Jesus, related to him all things that they had done and taught » ¹. At the same time they were so harassed by the crowds who left them no leisure to rest or to eat ², that our dear Saviour, full of compassion

¹ *Et convenientes apostoli ad Jesum, renunciaverunt ei omnia quae egerant et docuerant.* Mark, VI. 30.

² *Erant enim qui veniebant et redibant multi, et nec spatium manducandi habebant.* — Mark, VI. 31.

for them, took them away with Him to a solitary place beyond the lake ; « Come apart into a desert place, and rest a little ¹.

My dear brothers, is not this your own story? No later than yesterday, from early dawn till late at night, parish work of all kinds — catechising, preaching, meetings of your various societies and guilds — took up, one after another, every moment of your day. And your Sundays are by no means your only busy days ; throughout the week you have full days too. I can imagine then the effort it must have cost you to tear yourselves away from those absorbing pastoral cares. I fancy I can read the thoughts that beset the minds of more than one among you : visions of many things left unfinished ; anxieties and misgivings ; perhaps even the thought that your time would be better spent at your parochial work than here in a solitude of which, so far, you may have only felt the irksomeness. But, my dear friends, it is precisely because the whole being of the priest is apt to become engrossed in the interests of his fellow-men, because his generous desire for their welfare may fill up his whole life, that retirement

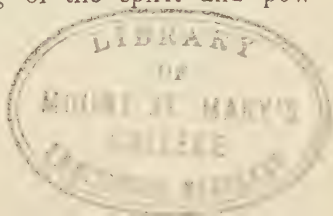
¹ « *Venite seorsum in desertum locum et requiescite pusillum* ». — *ibid.*

from time to time becomes for him an absolute necessity. Without it he cannot maintain the freedom and balance of his soul. So « come apart into a desert place, and rest a little ». The pastor does well to give himself to his flock, but he must not forget the priest within him. The faithful have a right to your service ; they claim it, and rightly, and they leave you but little respite ; but your interior is your own and you must not alienate it. There you must be your own master. And may these few days of leisure enable you to muster and review your forces, and to reconquer, if need be, that holy independence of the man who is truly free : for, in the words of St. Thomas, « He is a free man who is master of his own acts. — *Ille liber est qui actorum suorum dominus est* ».

We too, dear brothers, after the example of our Divine Master, feel lively compassion for your souls in their many needs ; and we earnestly entreat you to have compassion for yourselves, and in silent recollection to lend an attentive ear to what the Holy Spirit will say to you though us. Prepare your souls then, and endeavour to show yourselves docile, pious, generous co-operators with him who has the duty and the responsibility of directing you.

Yes, you must be in the fullest sense of the word my *co-operators* ; that is to say, when I express a desire, or warn you of a danger, you will answer promptly and resolutely : « We will stand by our Bishop, we will labour and toil and, if need be, suffer with him, to help him in accomplishing his work » . Each of you will strive to be as one of the seventy advisers whom Moses called to his aid, as one of the seventy-two disciples who acted as pioneers for the apostles, opening up the paths they were to tread. Each of you will answer me in his heart of hearts : « To the service of the Church of Mechlin I devote my faith and learning, the experience I have acquired, the ardour of my love for God and my neighbour ; and if in my own poor estimate of my talent I am tempted to think my personal work worth little or nothing, I shall try to persuade myself that, united with the work of my fellow-priests, and with that of my Bishop whom God has placed in the See of St. Rumold, it will prove more fruitful and efficacious. »

And to yourselves you will say : « Since our Bishop comes in the name of Jesus Christ to instruct us, not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in showing of the spirit and pow-



er » ¹, not to flatter our fancy or satisfy an idle curiosity, but to revive within us that faith wherein lies our God-given strength, we will listen to him in the spirit of faith and *in all docility*. We will spend these few days in deep recollection, repelling every thought that might divert our minds from the word of God ; we will seek solitude and silence to ponder on the words we shall hear and to let the whisperings of the Holy Spirit sink into our souls. « And they shall all be taught of God » ².

In His last discourse to His disciples how lovingly did our Divine Lord pray to His Father « that they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee » ³. We are gathered here, beloved brothers, to realize this union, which drew from Christ such a heart-stirring prayer before He went forth to die for us : united in the same faith, let us be also united in the same love, and attune our wills to one and the same effort of apostolic zeal.

You will therefore readily respond of what-

¹ *non in persuasibilibus humanæ sapientiæ verbis, sed in ostensione spiritus et virtutis*, — I. Cor. II. 4.

² *Et erunt omnes docibiles Dei* ». — John, VI. 45.

³ *Ut omnes unum sint, sicut tu Pater in me et ego in te*. John, XVII, 21.

soever demands I may make upon you. In silence and recollection you will listen piously to what God may suggest to me for the welfare of your souls. The word spoken in public to all is of necessity wanting in definite individual application. But there is an inner word that the Holy Spirit intends for each separate soul : it is to this you must lend a prompt and willing ear amid the silence of all external things, of your own imaginations and of your own senses : This is the word that must sink into your heart : this is the food that must nourish your soul and pass into the deepest depths of your interior life.

In the next place we must pray — very much and very earnestly. For the past month I have offered my daily Mass for the success of this Retreat ; for the same intention I have said my daily Office ; and I have asked many religious communities, both in this diocese and outside it, to unite their prayers with mine. Do likewise now yourselves ; let us all multiply our petitions during these days, constantly raising our hearts to God in acts of love, in earnest, ardent petitions to the Holy Ghost, to the Sacred Heart, to Our Blessed Lady, to our Guardian Angels and to the Patron Saints of our diocese. Let us pray for one another, confident that, if we are thus united

heart and soul, God will be in our midst. « Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. » ¹

III.

Dear brothers, let us raise our hearts on high, and from this first hour of the Retreat let us set to work earnestly, resolutely. One thing is certain : not one of you will leave this house next Friday the same man that he was on entering it. A retreat is not an isolated grace ; it is a continuous series of special graces. At this very moment while I speak to you there are to my own knowledge saintly souls praying for you ; — night and day they are laying siege to Heaven for you by their penances ; offering their frail bodies as a sacrifice to God that He may have pity on those among you who may possibly be in sore need of His special mercy, and if such there be, that He may transform them into saints. Your fellow-priests throughout the whole diocese are with you in spirit, daily remembering you at the altar. Prayer so earnest cannot be ineffectual. As in Advent when the Church sings « Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and

¹ *Ubi sunt duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo, ibi sum in medio eorum.* Matth. XVIII. 20.

let the clouds rain the Just One » ¹ : an answer is echoed from the heavens : « Let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Saviour » ² : so during these days of recollection the prayers that ascend to the throne of the Sovereign Judge in your behalf will be answered by copious floods of mercy. And your souls, will open to receive them. Could there be a single one among you who would obstinately reject such mercies ? I make the supposition because I know you are free agents. God who is knocking at each of your hearts will enter only if you yourselves freely open them to Him....

But I will not dwell on such a thought. You will all, will you not, be *men of good will*. You will all make the very most of these days of silence and prayer for the sanctification of your souls ; and not one of you, I confidently hope, will leave this house hardened against the grace of God.

Be of good courage then, dear friends ; have unbounded confidence in God and sincere goodwill towards Him ! You who are special workers for God among men, you will not squander a

¹ *Rorate, coeli, desuper et nubes pluant Iustum.* Isaias, XLV. 8.)

² *Aperiatur terra et germinet Salvatorem.* Ibid.

single one of His precious graces. This is the acceptable time, these are days that promise salvation : » and we helping do exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain.... behold, now is the acceptable time : behold now is the day of salvation ; » and we will be careful to disedify no man that none may have a pretext to judge unfavorably the mission we fulfil : » giving no offence to any man, that our ministry be not blamed » ¹.

In your name and in my own I place the Retreat which is now opened under the protection of our dear Mother, the most Holy Virgin Mary : I know that in doing so I am complying with the most earnest desire of your hearts. « We beseech Thee, O Lord, to pardon the sins of Thy servants, that we, who by our acts are unable to please Thee, may be saved through the intercession of the Mother of Thy Son, for ever and ever. Amen » ².

¹ *Adjuvantes autem exhortamur, ne in vacuum gratiam Dei recipiatis... Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile, ecce nunc dies salutis; nemine dantes ullam offensionem, ut non vituperetur ministerium nostrum. II. Cor. VI. 1-3.*

² *Famulorum tuorum, quaesumus Domine delictis ignosce, ut qui tibi placere de actibus nostris non valemus, genitricis Fillii tui Domini nostri intercessione salvemur! Qui tecum vivit et regnat, Deus, in saecula saeculorum. Amen. — Oratio in festo Assumptionis B. M. V.*

THE PREPARATION OF THE SOUL

SECOND DISCOURSE

How to make use of the Retreat.

§ I. — THE PREPARATION OF THE SOUL.

SECOND DISCOURSE.

HOW TO MAKE USE OF THE RETREAT.

Poenitentiam agite... Facite ergo fructum dignum poenitentiae.

Do penance... Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of penance. Matt. III. 2. 8.

My dear fellow-workers, why are we on retreat ? How can we co-operate during these days with the designs of Almighty God upon our souls ? In other words : What is the object of this Retreat ? In what dispositions are we to make it ? Those two questions we shall endeavour to answer in the present Discourse.

I.

OBJECT OF THE RETREAT.

We live ; we are moving on ; those who travel with us on the road are like ourselves provided with a pilgrim's staff ; all press forward more or less eagerly. Whither are they going ? Do they know where they are going ?

Day follows day ; and with uninterrupted alternation of light and darkness pass away the weeks, the months, the years, that make up the sum of our life here below. The sun has its rise, its noontide splendour, its twilight shades ; and then it sinks beneath the horizon. The pale moon waxes and wanes. The sea has its ebb and flow. The seasons are renewed in their appointed course. The waters of the ocean, drawn up in vapour by the heat of the sun, condense again to form our rivers and streams, and so to feed the source from which they sprang. The sea encroaches on the land, carrying away the solid earth to be deposited in its depths and to form the continents of the future. Even the stars, like little nails of gold fixed in the dome of heaven, are in a state of perpetual motion : science tells us that they are flying with lightening speed through spaces above the power of human calculation. And, like inanimate nature, living beings too have their periods of birth, growth and decay. Consider the new-born infant : its feeble limbs will wax strong ; it will grow and speak and act ; then after a short span of time — youth, maturity, old age — it will disappear from the scene of this world. Our memories can reach back for a generation or two, but seldom any farther. Towards what goal does this movement of all nature tend ?

There is within us a mysterious something that impels the soul towards abiding realities ; that lifts it above material things to heights from whence we can perceive the invisible and love that which experience cannot grasp. What is this free and immaterial soul of ours, ever seeking after the Infinite, — what but a wanderer, yearning for Him who having launched it on the billows of time, unceasingly attracts it towards Himself ? In that part of the liturgical year when the faithful sigh for the coming of their Saviour, the Church puts the following prayer on the lips of the priest during Mass : « May these mysteries, O Lord, cleaning us with their powerful efficacy, make us reach the source of them with purer hearts » ¹.

By right, the moral life of man is a circular movement of the free soul — come out from God and to Him returning. In point of fact, it is the passage from a state of damnation, through a period of free effort, to a state of perfection. And let me add here, to indicate in time the meaning and scope of the development I shall give to these ideas, that a retreat is as it were a halt in the headlong hurry with which the incidents

¹ *Haec sacra nos, Domine, potenti virtute mundatos, ad suam faciant puriores venire principium.* — Ist Sunday of Advent, Secret of the Mass.

of life crowd upon us ; a moment's pause to enable us to make a moral and spiritual survey of the past, and to mark out a rule of life for the future.

The two great master minds of the ages of faith, the one in the *summa Theologica*, the other in the *Divina Comedia*, have described the passing of man through the trial-state of time. The work of St. Thomas Aquinas comprises three parts : In the *first*, turning towards one of the poles of history, the origin of things, he contemplates God, the author of creation, and assists in spirit at the successive appearance of the angels, of material creatures, and lastly of man, whose intermediary position between the world of matter and that of spirit makes him a partaker of both. In the *second* — which comprises two sections, the one treating of the general ethics of free activity, the other of the special ethics regarding the acts and habits of the will in all their rich and manifold variety — describes the ascending movement of the soul towards God. It is for each individual to decide, of his own free will, to accomplish this journey heavenwards. The age of reason is not, as many think, the age when the child begins to reason ; it is when the child begins to reflect on his own interior dispositions, to know himself, to realize his responsibility, to consider his place in creation and turn deliberately

towards the goal to which his better nature is drawing him ; it is the time when, in the effort to attain to this supreme ideal, he has to resist the allurements of all inferior good, to practise the Christian virtues, and so commence to climb that ladder of perfection which will unite his soul with God Himself. As a matter of fact the first state of man on coming into this world is abnormal. He is a fallen creature and can resume his progress towards his appointed destiny only on condition of his being raised up by Christ his Redeemer, purified in the waters of Baptism, regenerated by sanctifying grace. The *third* part of the *Summa* describes how this fallen soul is raised up by the grace of its Divine Redeemer, Our Lord Jesus Christ¹.

¹ The *Summa contra Gentiles* is written on much the same plan as the *Summa Theologica*. It is divided into four Books ; the first three are philosophical, treating of what we can find out by Reason (*scibile*) , the Fourth completes the teachings of Reason by those of Faith, (*credibile*). Book I., after establishing God's existence, inquires into His operations as far as unaided reason can explore. Book II. puts us in presence of God's creatures, tells us of their origin, their differences, their natures. Book III. shows us the providential direction given by God to His creatures : God Himself is their supreme End : He draws them to Himself both by the general laws that govern material nature and by the special providence that watches over His intelligent creatures — the worlds of angels and of men.

Dante's great epic is built upon the same plan. The *Inferno* of the *Divine Comedy* is, in man's journey towards eternity, the *terminus a quo*, the starting point : the state of sin from which the soul must liberate itself to reach salvation and attain to final perfection. The *Purgatorio* is the *terminus per quem*, the means by which the soul frees itself from sin and advances by the practice of virtue towards Him who calls it to union with Himself. The *Paradiso*, the *terminus ad quem*, is the state of grace in which the creature, redeemed by Christ and beloved of God, loves Him in return and becomes united to Him.

This general conception pervades all ascetic theology ; the masters of the spiritual life divide into three stages the moral pilgrimage of the soul towards its end : the *purgative* way, in which the soul is cleansed from the stains of sin ; the *illuminative* way, in which it progresses in enlightenment and virtue ; the *unitive* way, in which it resolutely clings to God with full conformity to His Will in all things. The first stage is that of beginners, the *via incipientium* : the second that of souls in progress, the *via progredientium* ;

Book IV., following on the same lines as the other three, expounds the teachings of Faith concerning God Himself, the works of God, and the guidance of humanity to a supernatural end.

the third, that of the perfect, *via perfectorum*.¹

But why linger on mere human commentaries ? Hear the words of God Himself — the Church recalls them to us every day as we descend the altar-steps to spread among men with all our zeal the words of truth and life. From Eternity the Father begets His Son, and the creatures He calls into being derive whatever of beauty and goodness they possess from their conformity with that Consubstantial Wisdom who is their living model. Their reflected light should have been sufficient to convert the heathen nations and show them the road to Heaven ; but the darkness would not allow itself to be penetrated by the light. Then the heart of God was moved with pity. He sent His Son to adopt us into His family, and John the Baptist was the blessed Precursor chosen by Providence to make straight the way of the Lord and to herald the Kingdom of the Son of God on earth.

My dear brothers, you have heard the voice of John crying in the wilderness : « Bring forth

¹ We may remark here in passing, with Father Dumas of the Society of Mary in his work *L'Imitation de Jésus-Christ, Introduction à l'union intime avec Dieu*, that the *Imitation of Christ* is not in the least, as might seem at first sight, a mere mere collection of spiritual counsels, but a work deliberately arranged according to the plan just outlined.

therefore fruit worthy of penance » ¹ Weigh well his words, they are deep and decisive. Go not into the desert through mere curiosity, as did the proud Pharisees and the sensual Saducees, relying on their rank or the fame of their ancestors. Remember the stern and terrible words they called forth from the Baptist : « Ye brood of vipers... think not to say within yourselves : We have Abraham for our father. For I tell you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham. » ² Think not that God has need of your race for the fulfilment of His designs. Can He not destroy it and on its ruins raise another that will be faithful to Him ? There is one only means of salvation for you : so complete a change in your minds and hearts, that henceforth you will live in conformity with the new convictions and inclinations that grace will awaken within you ; thus only will you bring forth fruit worthy of penance.

The expression which the vulgate renders by *poenitentia* means spiritual change, μετανοεῖν, conversion, a revolution, and transformation of the interior dispositions, and the effect which the Precursor expected from this interior change was the production of *fruit*, that is of living works, works worthy of a really purified soul.

¹ *Pacite fructus dignos poenitentiae.* Matt. III. 8.

² Matt. III. 7-9.

Treasure up, my dear brothers, both for yourselves and for the faithful to whom you are bound to preach the truth, this weighty and solemn injunction of St. John the Baptist : *Facile fructos dignos poenitentiae*. Be fully convinced yourselves and endeavour to convince others, that the birth and growth of the supernatural life in the soul of the adult depends on penance ; on works of penance of course, for faith without works is a dead faith ; but on works that spring from the depths of the soul as the fruit from the blossom, and the blossom from the tree and its roots.

Be watchful : you have not a day, not an hour to lose. The woodman is at hand : his axe will presently strike the first blow ; if you postpone your efforts and the tree falls, its roots will wither forthwith and in vain will you try to revive it. The reaper is making ready to winnow the corn ; the good grain will be gathered into the barn, the chaff will be cast into the flames.

Do penance : give a new and higher impetus to your thoughts ; strengthen your resolutions, so that your life may be the faithful expression of your belief ; follow the example of our Divine Master by accomplishing all justice, « *Decet nos implere omnem justitiam* », then you too will enter on the unitive way and remain faithfully there. In the sacrament of baptism you received the Holy Ghost, « *baptizati in Spiritu Sancto et igne* ».

The more submissive you are to His inspirations, that is, to the light of Faith and the promptings of Charity, the more fully will He overshadow you with His wings, and the deeper the perception He will give you of these words of the Eternal Father : « This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased » ¹.

¹ *Hic est filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi complacui.* « We subjoin the entire passage from St. Matthew which we have just analyzed :

« Tunc exhibat ad eum Jerosolyma, et omnis Judaea, et omnis regio circa Jordanem.

Et baptizabantur ab eo in Jordane, confitentes peccata sua.

Videns autem multos Pharisæorum et Sadducæorum venientes ad baptismum suum, dixit eis : Progenies viperarum, quis demonstravit vobis fugere a ventura ira ?

Facite ergo fructum dignum poenitentiae.

Et ne velitis dicere intra vos : Patrem habemus Abraham ; dico enim vobis, quoniam potens est Deus de lapidibus istis suscitare filios Abrahæ.

Jam enim securis ad radicem arborum posita est. Omnis ergo arbor, quæ non facit fructum bonum, excidetur et in ignem mittetur.

Ego quidem baptizo vos in aqua in poenitentiam ; qui autem post me venturus est, fortior me est, cujus non sum dignus calceamenta portare : ipse vos baptizabit in Spiritu sancto et igni.

Cujus ventilabrum in manu sua, et permundabit arcem suam, et congregabit triticum suum in horreum, paleas autem comburet igni inextinguibili.

My dear brothers, gathered here together, you have broken with your everyday occupations. While here you cannot exert any useful influence over the affairs of your parishes. Have therefore the courage and the wisdom to put away all thoughts of them from your minds. Attend exclusively during these few days to your journey towards eternity. We are here as it were, pilgrims, gathered in the evening at a wayside inn, resting from the fatigue of our travels. Let us cast an eye over the portion of our journey which we have accomplished. Let us see where we are and what we have achieved for ourselves and for our ministry. Let us ask ourselves whether we have not from time to time wandered from the right path ; and, if we have, by what merciful disposition of Providence we have been led back to it. Then let us

Tunc venit Jesus a Galilœa in Jordanem ad Joannem, ut baptizaretur ab eo.

Joannes autem prohibebat eum, dicens : Ego a te debeo baptizari, et tu venis ad me !

Respondens autem Jesus dixit ei : Sine modo : sic enim decet nos implere omnem justitiam. Tunc dimisit eum.

Baptizatus autem Jesus confestim ascendit de aqua. Et ecce aperti sunt coeli, et vidit spiritum Dei descendentem sicut columbam, et venientem super se.

Et ecce vox de coelis dicens : Hic est filius meus dilectus in quo mihi complacui. » Matt. III. 5-17.

study the map of the country we have still to traverse ; let us gather information from the most competent guides about the difficulties that await us on the road ; let us take stock of our resources and lay in fresh provisions. Then refreshed and invigorated by the halt we are making together, we shall resume with cheerful hearts and buoyant spirits the steep, rugged path of our own sanctification, and the manifold labours of our ministry for the salvation of souls.

« Vouchsafe, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that thy family may walk onward in the way of salvation ; and that by following the exhortations of blessed John, the Precursor, they may securely reach the presence of Him whom he preached, Our Lord Jesus Christ, thy Son » ¹.

Let us then, my dear brothers, « proceed in peace, in the Name of the Lord : *procedamus in pace, in nomine Domine. Amen.* » ².

¹ *Praesta, quaesumus, omnipotens Deus, ut familia tua per viam salutis incedat ; et beati Joannis Praecursoris hortamenta sectando, ad eum quem praedixit secuta perveniat, Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum Filium tuum.*

² *Itinerarium clericorum.*

II.

DISPOSITIONS REQUIRED FOR THE RETREAT.

My dear brothers, you now understand the object of the Retreat on which you are entering. It is admirably expressed in these two words of St. Francis de Sales : *to reform our lives*, and to decide *to live* henceforth *wholly for God*. — Every one should make a good Retreat in order to arouse himself, by spiritual exercises, to attempt *a complete re-ordering of his life*, and to take *a strong and earnest resolution to live entirely for God*¹.

Now supposing this to be your aim, and we have not the least doubt that it is, another question arises : How are you to attain your object ? In other words : What are the dispositions on your part that will insure the success of the Retreat ? The answer to this question will form the second part of our present discourse. And I think I find the answer to it in these words addressed by St. Paul to his disciple Timothy : « Now the end of the commandment is charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith »².

We must never forget that we are established

¹ *Treatise on the Love of God*, XII. 8.

² *Finis autem præcepti est caritas de corde puro, et conscientia bona, et fide non ficta*. I. Tim. I. 5.

in a supernatural order. It will not suffice, therefore, to aim at the development, however complete, of the resources of our nature ; we shall have done nothing towards eternal life so long as we have not by the help of God's grace elevated our natural faculties and all our aspirations above the plane of mere natural goodness, attaining to the love of God for His own sake, which is charity. « Be chaste », says St. Gregory, « be chaste even in an eminent degree ; and furthermore, devote yourselves to good works ; for such I will consider you worthy of praise. But I expect still more from you : for you have not done enough until your ideal transcends all mere natural goodness »¹.

Here then we find the three conditions of true charity : purity of heart, integrity of conscience, sincerity of faith. *Cor purum*. Your heart must be pure : therefore, if need be, purify it : do not cling to what is evil. You will search into the innermost recesses of your heart and there you will perceive your grievous sins, if you have

¹ *Redemptori etenim nostro unum sine altero placere nequaquam potest : Si aut is qui bona agit, adhuc luxuriae inquinamenta non deserit aut is qui castitate praeeminet, necdum se per bona opera excrcet... sed et si utrumque agitur, restat, ut quisquis ille est, spe ad supernam patriam tendat, et nequaquam se a viliis pro mundi hujus honestate contineat. S. Gregorii, hom. XIII in Evangelia.*

had the misfortune to commit such, and also your venial sins ; and you will take note of any evil habits, and of the conditions which occasioned your falls. You will review the time that has elapsed since your last retreat, or you may even go over your whole life : for your great concern will be to gain a thorough knowledge of your own inner self, with the firm resolve to reveal yourself to your confessor exactly as you feel you are in the eyes of Almighty God. You will sigh for a spotless purity of heart and conscience as ardently « as the hart panteth after the fountains of water » ; and often on bended knees you will pour forth your earnest supplications for mercy to Him who is your Sovereign Judge : « O God, be merciful to me a sinner ! — Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord. — Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy. — Cast me not away from Thy Face. — Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels. — In my trouble I cried to the Lord and He heard me. — O Lord, let thy mercy come upon us, as we have hoped in thee. » Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom ¹ »

¹ *Deus, propitius esto mihi peccatori ! — De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine. — Miserere mei Deus, secundum magnam*

Conscientia bona. — Thus purified, your *conscience will be without reproach* in the eyes of God, and you will open it gladly and generously to the fertilizing dew of His grace ; your soul will proclaim itself ready to obey the Divine will in all things : » And I lifted up my hands to thy commandments, which I loved : and I was exercised in thy justifications. « — With my whole heart I have sought after thee : let me not stray from thy commandments. — I am thine, save thou me : for I have sought thy justifications. » ¹ Oh, how often already has the voice of the Divine Master been calling to you as of old Heli called to Samuel ! He called you in the days of your childhood, while you were growing up in innocence in the bosom of a Christian family ; He called you in the Seminary to take Holy Orders ; and since then how often, oh ! how often, has He called you in your yearly retreats, here in

miser ricordiam tuam. — *Ne repellas me a facie tua.* — *Cor mundum crea in me Deus et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis.* — *Ad Dominum, cum tribularer, clamavi et exaudivit me.* — *Fiat misericordia tua, Domine, super nos, quemadmodum speravimus in te.* — *Domine memento mei cum veneris in regnum tuum.*

¹ *Et levavi manus meas ad mandata, quae dilexi, et exercebar in justificationibus tuis.* — *In toto corde meo exquisivi te, ne repellas me a mandatis tuis.* — *Tuus sum ego, doce me, Domine, justificationes tuas.* — Ps. cxvii. 48, 10, 94.

this very house. And to each call did you answer with a whole-hearted loyalty : « Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth » ? ¹ Or did you perhaps set secret limits and conditions to your service, — insurmountable obstacles to the efficacy of divine grace ?... This time, any how, let there be no more of that. Away with all obstacles, all wilful resistance ; never again give a selfish « no » to the divine call ; never again raise obstacles ; give a free field henceforth to the action of divine grace on your souls : « O Divine Lord of the Vineyard, dress anew the vineyard of my soul : cut off the withered branches : spare not Thy pruning knife. It is not branches nor leaves I desire : it is fruit I wish to bear for Thee. And if I recoil or shudder it will be only the weakness of nature shrinking from pain, not the refusal of my will to submit to Thy Divine operation. I have full confidence in Thy kindnens without limit ; I well know that if Thou makest me suffer for a time it is only to restore me to health and peace — not such peace as the world doth promise, but Thine own peace, O my God, that peace which Thou didst so gladly announce to Thy apostles : Peace I leave with you, MY peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth do I give unto you.

¹ *Loquere, Domine, quia audit servus tuus.* (I Reg. III, 10).

Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid¹ I know that His peace alone will satisfy to the fullest all the Christian aspirations of my heart ». This sincere good-will and docility to grace is what God requires of you : with this He will transform you ; with this you will advance rapidly along the road that leads to true happiness, to Himself. No sooner will you have removed the obstacles than floods of grace will inundate your souls, and you may firmly trust that God will accomplish in you the saving work of His love.

Fides non ficta. According to the beautiful definition of St. Paul, « faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not.² It will give you the standpoint whence you can contemplate in its true light that world which is above the powers of sense, the world of those realities which alone are true because they alone are eternal. Then the light of faith, as it penetrates the remotest depths of your souls even to « the joints and marrow » separating therein the good from the evil, will show you clearly what has hitherto been amiss

¹ « *Pacem relinquo vobis, pacem MEAM do vobis ; non quomodo mundus dat, ego do vobis. Non turbetur cor vestrum, neque formidet.* Joan, XIV. 27.

² *Sperandarum substantia rerum, argumentum non apparen-
tium.* Hebr. XI.

in your spiritual life. « The word of God is living and effectual... and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of all the joints also and the marrow. » ¹ And turning again to God you will say to Him in the earnestness of your heart : « It is not for me, O Lord, to trace out the path I am to tread : Thine O Lord, it is to show the way ; mine to follow with humble docility the path of Thy commandments and counsels. The more heedful I am to Thy voice, the more obedient to Thy behests, the brighter will be Thy light along my path ; a pillar of fire will illumine the desert for me, and even though, like Israel, I may have been full forty years a rebel against Thy Sacred Majesty, this year at last will see me change : it will see me return once and for all at least to the practice of virtue, if not even to perfection and sanctity ! »

III.

CONCLUSION.

My dear brothers, the divine husbandman is about to sow His seed in the field of your souls.

¹ *Vivus est sermo Dei, et efficax... et pertingens usque ad divisionem animae et spiritus, compagum quoque ac medullarum.*
Hebr. IV. 12.

Hold yourselves in readiness for Him. If you welcome not the seed that falls to your share but allow it to be stifled by the spirit of evil it may be the cause of your damnation. I can hardly admit the thought that, in this assembly of priests, there could be a single one with a heart steeled against the pleadings of grace, given over to impurity and sacrilege, refusing to shake himself free from their bondage. But were there even one such, it would be one too many, and I would beseech that unfortunate man to throw himself prostrate before that God of Mercy who still awaits his repentance, and to say to Him : « Out of the depths of the abyss of my sin do I raise my voice to Thee, O Lord ; Lord, hear my prayer... If Thou considerest only my guilt, how can I dare to stand before Thee ? But Thy heart is full of compassion, and copious indeed are Thy mercies » ¹.

It is, however, much more to be feared that in so large an audience there may be some of a thoughtless, superficial habit of mind. The most solemn admonition strikes merely the surface of such souls ; nothing can fasten or sink into their depths. From the careless way in which they

¹ *De profundis clamavi ad te Domine, Domine exaudi vocem meam... Quia apud te propitiatio est et copiosa apud eum redemptio. Ps. CXXIX. 1, 3, 7.*

squander the inestimable treasure of time, you would imagine they believe this life to be merely a sort of common pleasure-trip. Such souls have no roots, says Holy Scripture — *radicem non habent* ; they never give themselves the benefit of a serious meditation ; their ministry is more like the mere practice of a profession than the fulfilment of priestly office ; they manage, let us hope, to avoid grievous sin, but their work is deplorably unfruitful, and in the eyes of God their whole lives have scarcely the value of one day : « This is he that heareth the word, and immediately receiveth it with joy ; yet hath he not root in himself, but is only for a time ». At the slightest opposition his shallow soul loses courage ; to the least assault he succumbs : « when there ariseth tribulation and persecution because of the word, he is presently scandalized » ¹.

There is yet a third class of priests, one which in our days is probably on the increase : they are those who allow their souls to be enveloped by a thorny overgrowth of temporal cares, useless reading, political action, or even their solicitude for the success of admittedly meritorious works. They seem to grudge the rare moments

¹ *Verbum audit, et continuo cum gaudio accipit illud ; non habet autem in se radicem, sed est temporalis... facta autem tribulatione et persecutione propter verbum, continuo scandalizatur.* Matt. XIII. 20, 21.

they give to God in the celebration of Mass, in meditation, at their Office or their visits to the Blessed Sacrament, as if all this were so much time wrongly taken from their parish duties. And they are far from being what one would call bad, these priests; indeed as a rule they are zealous-minded men; but they neglect to lift up their eyes to heaven so as to keep constantly and steadily in view the real object of the present life. Under the burden of their many cares they actually stifle the seed of the word of God and in spite of all their labour and fatigue they bring forth no fruit of salvation : « And he that received the seed among thorns is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choketh up the word, and he becometh fruitless » ¹.

But happily, my dear Brothers, you who are eager to receive the seed of the divine word, to let it sink into the good soil of your souls, to assimilate it and so bring forth fruit, you form the great majority of those here present; though even here, what a variety of degrees there be in the utilization of God's gifts! « The one [yieldeth] a hundredfold, and another sixty, and another thirty. » ²

¹ *Qui autem seminatus est in spinis, hic est qui verbum audit, et sollicitudo saeculi istius et fallacia divitiarum suffocat verbum, et sine fructu efficitur. Matt. XIII, 22.*

² *Qui vero in terram bonam seminatus est, hic est audit ver-*

Enough however about the past ! From this Retreat we must have done with it. — It is God that sends me among you now to sound the call to arms, to cry to you : « It is five-and-twenty, fifty, sixty years, since you first opened your eyes to the light of this world. You are at the first, the second, the third, stage of your earthly or priestly career, but whether you be labourers of the third, the sixth, the ninth, or even the eleventh hour, you can, from this very day, if only you wish it, earn all alike the same generous reward of a happy eternity from the hands of the Divine Husbandman. Could the All-Powerful God Himself be possibly more liberal towards you ? He is willing to close His eyes to the years you have squandered in idleness, in lukewarmness, perhaps even in sin. All He asks of you is : for the present a submissive goodwill, and for the future an unbounded confidence in Himself. »

My dear brothers, I can see in spirit in the midst of us a ladder like that of Jacob, connecting us with Heaven. Angels are descending laden with divine lights and inspirations and blessings. From above the Eternal Father stoops to us, inviting us by word and look to climb up

bum et intelligit et fructum affert... Et facit aliud quidem centesimum, aliud autem sexagesimum, aliud vero trigesimum, Matt. XIII. 3-23.

towards Himself. And I can see you all at different heights upon this mysterious ladder. Some are quite near to God ; laden with years, with virtue, and with merit : they are soon to receive the reward of their long and arduous labours. The majority occupy the intermediate steps at various levels. Some are still low down, very low perhaps, and very slow to mount. But all alike aspire to climb the ladder, and the prayer of the Psalmist is on their lips : « To thee have I lifted up mine eyes who dwellest in heaven. Behold, as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters, as the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of her mistress : so are our eyes unto the Lord our God, until he have mercy on us » ¹

Let us take courage then, beloved brothers ; let us climb and toil and hope. Yet a little while, yet a little suffering, *adhuc modicum*, and joy will be our portion for ever. Courage then ! What are the fatigues and sorrows of this life compared with the flood of glory in which our good God will bathe our beatified souls ? Courage, all ! Let there not be a single laggard in our ranks ! The

¹ *Ad te levavi oculos meos, qui habitas in coelis. Ecce sicut oculi servorum in manibus dominorum suorum ; sicut oculi ancillae in manibus dominae suae ; ita oculi nostri ad Dominum Deum nostrum donec misereatur nostri, Ps. CXXII 1-2.*

labourers of the eleventh hour, if they only will it, can earn the same wage as those who have toiled from the dawn. They have only to make amends for their sloth by a more intense contrition, a deeper humility and a stronger and more childlike trust in the merciful love of Our Divine Saviour.

You will adopt then as your watchword, to guide you through this Retreat, the words of St. Francis de Sales : « Every one should make a good Retreat to arouse himself by spiritual exercises to undertake *a complete reformation of his life*, and to make *a strong and earnest resolution to live entirely for God* ¹

¹ *Treatise on the love of God*, XII. 8.

§ 2. COMPLETE REFORMATION OF LIFE

THIRD DISCOURSE.

The right ordering of our lives.

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THIRD DISCOURSE.

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I.

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST ON THE ORDERING
OF OUR LIVES.

*Coelum et terra transibunt,
verba autem mea non tran-
sibunt.... Videte, vigilate et
orate.*

Heaven and earth shall
pass away, but my word
shall not pass away... Take
ye heed, watch and pray.
— Mark, XIII. 31, 33.

My dear brothers, our Divine Saviour, —
whose first care was for the « Twelve » He
had selected for the onerous duty of impart-
ing to the pagan world the light and warmth of
their newly found faith and charity, — our Divine
Saviour sat one evening with His chosen group
on Mount Olivet, over against Mount Moriah on
which stood the Temple. They had worked hard
all day, discussing questions with the chief
priests and the scribes as well as preaching to

the multitude. The hour for rest had come, the hour reserved by Jesus for His chosen friends and helpers. On leaving the Temple a short time previously, one of them had turned round to admire it, saying : « Master, behold what manner of stones, and what buildings are here ! »¹ — and the Divine Master, seeing the pride of the Jew rise at the sight of the superb edifice which was the glory of the nation, had answered : « Seest thou all these great buildings ? There shall not be left a stone upon a stone, that shall not be thrown down. »² Whereupon the apostles, Peter and James, Andrew and John, said in turn : « Tell us when shall these things be ? And what shall be the sign when all these things shall begin to be fulfilled ? »³ — Then the Divine Teacher, taking advantage of the anxiety of His disciples, the solemn twilight hour, the imposing majesty of the hills opposite — whereon the little flock around their Pastor already saw in fancy the ruins of a future day — explained to them the dangers to which their faith would be exposed, and the persecutions they must

¹ *Magister, adspice quales lapides et quales structuræ !* — Mark, XIII. 1.

² *Vides has omnes magnas ædificationes. Non relinquetur lapis super lapidem qui non destruetur.* — *ibid.*, XIII. 2.

³ *Dic nobis quando ista fient ? Et quod signum erit quando hæc omnia incipient consummari ?* — *ibid.*, XIII. 4.

endure in defence of it. After describing the destruction of the Temple He passes on, by a natural transition, to the great final catastrophe of the Last Judgment. Drawing from these scenes the moral they suggest, and for which they had been given, the Sovereign Lord of time and eternity engraves in the depths of their souls this supreme declaration : « Heaven and earth shall pass away. but my word shall not pass away. »¹ Yea, in very truth all you see around you will pass away : one thing only is permanent and will triumph throughout all time : it is my word ; to the end will this word remain the immutable rule for the guidance of humanity. Draw, then, the needful lesson from this ; consider well what I have taught you ; « Take ye heed, watch and pray.² »

And, the compassionate heart of the Saviour, forgetting none of His children, included all in the little band around Him : « What I say to you I say to all : Watch.³ »

*
* *

It is now nearly twenty centuries since these prophetic words fell from the lips of Christ,

¹ *Coelum et terra transibunt, verba autem mea non transibunt.* *ibid.*, XIII. 31.

² *Videte, vigilate et orate* — *ibid.*, XIII. 33.

³ *Quod vobis dico, omnibus dico : vigilate.* — *ibid.*, XIII. 37.

and each succeeding age has seen the prophecy verified. The Apostles beheld with their own eyes the ruin of the city and temple of Jerusalem ; and to this day the Jews wander over the face of the earth, bearing witness by their dispersion to God's punishment of their deicide. The empires that in those days were most firmly established have been long since overthrown. The power of Rome has disappeared ; that of Constantinople has also been swept away ; the Holy Roman Empire has fallen to pieces in more modern times ; scarcely a hundred years ago, Napoleon terrified the nations when his invading armies seemed on the point of establishing France as mistress of Europe : but Waterloo and St. Helena were the answer of Divine Providence to the proud challenge hurled by the despot at the prisoner of Savona and Fontainebleau.

The patient labours of archæologists are reviving in our own days the remembrance of empires that were almost forgotten before the coming of Christ. Memphis, Babylon, Susa, Athens, Alexandria, each in turn, has given us with pictures of civilisations, that have vanished, fresh proofs that races and nations, no less than individuals, rise and develop only to decay and disappear. When we look back on the centuries that are gone do we not plainly see that ruins

are the landmarks of history ? The traveller stops to muse in the Coliseum, or on the sands that surround the Basilica of Ravenna ; or he follows the rise and fall of the various styles in architecture : the Roman, the Bysantine, the different periods of Gothic, the revivals attempted by the Renaissance and the Empire, down to the gropings of our own day. But if all this proves anything, is it not that the richest achievements of man's power and genius are but of a day ? « Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. »

As succeeding generations of men are laid to rest in the dust from which they sprang, the souls that for a time breathed life into them escape destruction and go forth laden with their works, good or bad, to take their appointed places in a world that knows no end. If, as materialists argue, the whole of man were only matter, subject consequently to total dissolution, the world with its actual social organisation such as we see it, and such as we all wish to maintain it, would be simply meaningless. If there be no power above me, and no hereafter for me, if the few years I spend here in life are all that belong to me, I should be foolish indeed not to make the most of them for my own individual interests ! If to-morrow or the day after I am

to drop off into unconsciousness and be fixed evermore in insensibility, what matters it to me what the romancers of science proclaim to me about the evolution of this planet ! If the human animal were only an animal, he could have but one law — I would say *duty* if the word could have any intelligible meaning for a materialist, — and that law would be to wallow in shameless lust, to circumvent others and rob them of their means by violence or by fraud, and then, his capacity for pleasure once exhausted, he should, unless he be altogether wanting in common sense, put an end to a life the purpose of which had been achieved.

A French scholar, Monsieur Félix Le Dantec, an *enfant terrible* of the materialist school, candidly acknowledges the logic of our conclusion. But fortunately, he adds, the greater number of materialists shrink from putting into practice these deductions from their own doctrines ; fortunately, humanity does not act up to such beliefs. But why « fortunately » ? we ask. If materialism be true, if it be dictated by science, why should its failure be desirable ?

My dear brothers, those who thus rejoice at this want of logic in the human animal, those whose cherished ideal is a solidarity of so-called *superior* interests which they place above what they call (one wonders why), the *baser* appetites

of man : those men I maintain are honest men, good men almost in spite of themselves, men who have retained the consciousness of a principle distinct from matter and superior to it, a principle whose aspirations soar above the perishable and rest only in the immutable, only in the absolute. There can be no need here to dwell at any length on proofs of the immateriality and immortality of the soul ; but there would be a break in the continuity of our discourse were we not to recall at least in a few words one or other of the arguments that support our belief in an invisible world.

Man rises in thought above all concrete realities ; he has power to strip them of the concreteness which belongs to their material condition : for each thing which he perceives in its sensible determinations, he conceives an abstract type which its very abstractness makes materially unrealisable. It is he, therefore, who by means of a power disengaged from the fetters of matter, forms this mental type ; it is he who next compares this type with the sensible things which he sees, or imagines to be realized in nature ; and who thus forms that object by the presence of which we recognize a human intellect... the *universal*. From this centre of relations with matter, to which he himself is attached, he dominates the whole of this transitory world of sense ; he is

conscious of his superiority to it ; and, as Pascal says, though he be but a thinking *reed*, yet he is superior to all this mechanism of the universe even should it crush him : for he *knows* that he is being crushed, whereas the universe knows nothing of it.

Each one of us is conscious of a tendency within him, whereby he aspires towards something better, truer, nobler, more beautiful than aught he sees around him. Now, either these urgent, irresistible, universal aspirations are vain — in which case we must conclude that this human machine, this masterpiece of the visible universe, is a wretched failure ; and abandon that « belief in order » upon which the certitude of science is based ; — or else we must admit that above the realities which come within our experience, and are true, good, or beautiful in a certain degree, there is a Perfection complete, absolute, unshared and self-sufficing, of which the things around us are but faint and short-lived imitations. Oh ! how keenly this longing for the Absolute was felt by that brilliant child of Africa who, having spent his youth in vain attempts to gratify both sense and reason, finally threw himself, vanquished, into the arms of the Absolute that is alone capable of satisfying the heart and mind of man ! « Thou hast made us, O Lord, for Thyself, and our

hearts can find no rest until they rest in Thee '.

Kant, that destructive genius of speculative metaphysics, had a clear, unerring insight into this dictate of conscience. Duty, he says, imposes itself upon me with all the authority of an absolute law. Cost what it may, in all circumstances whatsoever, always and everywhere, I *must* be truthful, I *must* act fairly, I *must* keep my word when I have pledged it. And if I *must* do it, it is clear that I *can* do it. The morality of duty implies freedom in the moral agent. Duty performed without any reference to self-interest is the highest ideal to which man can attain. But then what will be the result ? Will those heroic souls who have most completely laid aside all self-interest be left without reward ? That would be incredible. There must, therefore, be a Higher Power to sanction the disinterested accomplishment of duty, and to reward virtue by happiness. And since in the course of our life here below virtue is not duly rewarded, there must be a future life in which a Sovereign Ruler completes His sanction of the moral order by giving to each according to his deserts. The philosopher of Koenigsberg, whose ideas have such widespread authority in our days, employed this indirect line of reason-

¹ *Fecisti nos ad te, Domine, et irrequietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.* — St. Augustine.

ing to re-establish in the human mind those beliefs — in the immortality of the soul, in a life to come, in freedom of the will, in a supreme Law-giver, in all the great truths that materialism would fain deny — beliefs which form the true and traditional basis of all spiritualist philosophies, especially of philosophies belonging to Christian times.

We who have the peace-giving certainties of the Gospel and are sheltered by the protection of the Church, do not perhaps appreciate as keenly as others the blessing of firm convictions about a future life. Listen a moment to some of the cries of anguish uttered by souls that have gone adrift. You cannot have forgotten the distress of that poor Théodore Jouffroy who wasted the best years of his ardent youth in the school of Victor Cousin and then discovered suddenly, to his deep dismay, that his Christian faith was gone and that the rationalistic philosophy had nothing to offer in its place. « Never », he says, « shall I forget that December evening when the veil that had hidden from me my own unbelief dropped from before my eyes. I still hear in fancy the sound of my own footsteps in that bare and narrow room where in the long, dreary hours of the night I paced to and fro. Methinks I see the half-clouded moonlight glimmer on the frozen window-

panes. The hours fled by unnoticed ; following the train of thought that beset me, I went down with increasing fear deeper and deeper into my own soul ; and as my thought dispelled, one after another, the illusions that had hitherto hidden it from my view, I saw more and more clearly into its hidden recesses. In vain did I cling to the last remnants of faith, as a shipwrecked sailor clings to the last spar of his ship ; terrified at the unknown void into which I was drifting, I fell back on the recollections of my childhood, of my native home, of the faces and forms so dear to my heart, of all that I loved and held sacred. But to no purpose did I struggle ; the on-rushing current of my thought was stronger than all else ; parents, and home, and fond memories, and faith, — every link that bound my soul to the past, — all was swept away. The ordeal went on, more fierce and bitter as it drew to its dreaded term ; and then, alas ! the naked truth stood revealed : in the depths of my being ruins alone remained : no belief had weathered the storm, nothing survived of all I had once believed about my own soul and God, about my destiny in this life and in the next. I rejected it all, for I rejected the authority on which I had received it. This authority I could no longer admit ; I cast it from me. Those hours were terrible ; and when towards morning I threw myself exhausted on

my bed, I felt that my earlier life, so cheerful and so full, was extinguished ; that another, gloomy and lonely had opened up before me — a life whose paths I was doomed to tread alone, alone with the blighting thoughts that had driven me to it, thoughts that I was tempted to curse bitterly in my heart. »

« The days that followed this discovery, » continues Jouffroy, « were the saddest I ever lived. In vain did my soul seek to regain the shore from which it had drifted..... never had I so fully realized the importance of the problems of life, as now when I had lost the solution of them. I was an infidel, yet I hated infidelity..... Finding this uncertainty about the enigma of human life unbearable, and having no longer the light of faith to illumine it for me, I had to fall back on the light of reason. I resolved to devote all my time, my whole life if necessary, to the study of this supreme question : and in this way I was led to philosophical research.... »

« For a while I succeeded in persuading myself that I was treading a sure and well-defined path towards positive knowledge of those things that, above all others, concern man most intimately..... »

« But all philosophy seemed sunk in a deep den where there was no air, so that my soul, so recently exiled from Christianity, was like

to suffocate. And yet the authority of the masters and the zeal of the disciples abashed me, and I dared not betray either my surprise or my disappointment. » ¹

We have referred elsewhere² to the collapse of all Gratry's ambitious dreams, and the bewilderment that seized him when for the first time he clearly realized that, sooner or later, death would claim his body for the dust. « And will that be the end of all ? » he pondered. « Is it possible that the insatiable longing for life which consumes my very soul, will be for ever frustrated ? No, it cannot be. My soul and its works will *not* pass away. »

Think on this, our Divine Master used to say to His disciples, take it to heart — *videte*, — your souls are destined for immortal life. On the glow of the flame that will one day consume the generations of men and their works ; on the last awful upheaval of the earth and the heavens ; on the spectacle of all the great catastrophes recorded in history : on all that let your thoughts be often and deeply fixed. Picture to yourselves the Last Judgment and the final rendering of accounts to Him who will judge both the living and the dead. « Take ye heed, watch and pray. »

¹ Cf. Nettement, *Histoire de la Littérature Française sous le Gouvernement de Juillet*, I. pp. 458 sqq.

² Funeral oration of Cardinal Goossens.

A few practical reflections on these three words will form the subject of the second part of our discourse.

II.

THE DUTIES WHICH THIS TEACHING OF CHRIST IMPOSES ON US.

St. Thomas Aquinas, in one of his short religious writings, *De Dilectione Dei et Proximi*, quotes and explains these striking words of St. Augustine : « *Anima media inter Deum et creaturas posita, conversione ad Deum illuminatur, melioratur et perficitur ; conversione ad creaturas, obtenebratur, deterioratur, corrumpitur* ».

« What is this mysterious being formed of a body that passes away and a soul that lives on ? By what law is it governed ? » he asks. And the answer comes : « The principle that gives life to man, that is, his soul, is placed midway, as it were, between God and the things of the corporeal world : when it turns towards God it is enlightened, ennobled, perfected : but when it stoops to creatures it is blinded, degraded, corrupted. »

Man is endowed with freedom of action : he can choose either the passing things of this life, or the permanent realities of the next ; he can cling to earth, or soar aloft towards heaven.

My dear brothers, it is most important that from this first day of your Retreat you should *realize* this : that *you are free*.

Of course you can get assistance in the work of your spiritual exercises ; the eternal truths can be presented to you more or less forcibly ; we can exhort you more or less earnestly to rule your conduct by them ; but the real, the efficacious work must be accomplished by and within yourselves ; it must be a *personal* work : it will be for each one of you, himself *alone*, to pronounce the — for him — decisive word.

You are free ; the stars of heaven move without variation in their appointed course ; the plants and the animals are of necessity subject to the laws that govern them. Man alone has the privilege of choosing the object of his deepest love, and of tracing out for himself the path by which he means to attain it. On the choice he makes depends his worth as a man ; by that he will be appraised : what he loves and aims at is the key to his character : *L'homme vaut ce qu'il aime*. The intellect brings to its own level the things it knows ; but the will takes itself the level of what it loves¹. Take to heart therefore, my dear brothers, the appeal of St. Augustine. You have come into this Retreat to consider

¹ Cf. St. Thomas, *De Veritate*, q. 22, art. II.

the direction your lives ought to take, to find the full meaning of life, to rate it at its real value.

Suppose our Divine Saviour were to present Himself visibly to us, offering to converse with us as He did of old with His disciples when they were gathered around Him on the hillside opposite the Temple of Jerusalem. Suppose that *we* were gathered around Him at the close of day in the neighbourhood of one of our great capitals. The flood of artificial light from the city casting its illumination skywards would tell us of thousands of feverish souls, all in earnest pursuit of some object or other — of sinful pleasure perhaps, or of honest work for daily bread. And suppose our Divine Master allowed us to feed our imaginations on the scene spread out before us, beholding in fancy the hotels and the palaces, the museums and the theatres, the drawing-rooms and the garrets, the brilliant courts and the sordid alleys, and the many thoroughfares for traffic, underground, overground and even suspended in space. Now if, while we listened to all the hum of this civilisation that dazzles us, our Saviour were to let fall once more from His Sacred lips the unchanging and unchangeable word that this will all one day be but a memory..... what should we conclude ?.....

But, it *will* be so, my dear brothers ; all these

wonderful capitals of the old and new worlds are fated to disappear. Perhaps this surprises us ; but let us reflect. Have you not sometimes stopped to think that fifteen or sixteen centuries ago Africa gave to the Church such men as Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine ; and that in our days governments and learned societies are slowly and laboriously bringing to light the ruins of Timgad and Carthage ? Some day perhaps will see the peoples of Asia and Africa leaders of civilisation ; but if so, they too will in turn pass away ; for all that can be seen, or heard, or touched will pass away ; and whatever resists the slow, disintegrating action of ordinary natural causes will perish suddenly in the general catastrophe of the Judgment Day : *Dies irae, dies illa, solvet saeculum in favilla, teste David cum Sybilla* — that terrible day indeed, when the « world, » that is, whatever is measured by time, will be reduced to ashes, as the prophets of the Old Testament and the Seers of paganism have foretold.

If, my dear brothers, we heard our Divine Saviour foretell in very deed the ruin of our own great capitals, we should no doubt, like the apostles, be more curious to learn the details of such events than to apply to ourselves the practical lesson they convey ; we too would address Him as they did : « Master, tell us, when shall these things be ? » But to us, as to the apostles,

our Divine Master would certainly reply : « Of that day or hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but the Father ¹. » And leading us back to the only realities that matter, those that do not pass away, He would surely repeat to us the warning : « Take ye heed, watch and pray. *Videte, vigilate et orate.* »

Our Saviour returned to heaven. Before withdrawing from earth His visible presence, He founded His Church ; and to each of its members He allotted his own special task. To us priests He has given charge of the fold ; in our hands He has placed the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. « Watch ye therefore, » He says to us, for you know not when the lord of the house cometh : at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning, lest coming on a sudden, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you I say to all : Watch ². »

Videte : Take ye heed. — My dear brothers, this warning is a grave one, it is urgent ; listen to it : « Take ye heed : *videte* ». Look straight ahead and fix your eye steadfastly on the goal

¹ *De die autem illo vel hora nemo scit, neque angeli in cælo neque Filius, nisi Pater.* — Mark, VIII. 32.

² *ibid.* XIII, 35-37.

you are to attain. We spoke a moment ago of that irresistible inner impulse that is ever urging us towards an ideal superior to the enjoyments of sense and above our own selfish interests. The secret of it is that we are made for God, for His glory, and not for our own satisfaction. Reflect on all your surroundings, on yourselves : Not a single being that falls within our experience is in possession of what is necessary for its own proper subsistence. Not one is self-sustaining ; all have their day of birth, their transitory evolution and their day of destruction.

Hence, one or other of two alternatives : Either *all* beings, without a *single* exception, are marked by this essential contingency, are devoid of a reason within themselves for their existence : in which case we are face to face with an unavoidable contradiction. For, in point of fact each of these beings is in actual possession of existence : if he be not himself the source of this existence, he must have received it from some other being : but if all are in the same case all alike must have received it : Consequently no single one of them could have been the first to give it to another : and hence the intrinsic contradiction involved in the actual existence of such a being, — a contradiction which repeats itself to our perplexed intelligence

for every single contingent being in the universe around us.

Or else we take the other alternative and affirm that every contingent being that exists owes its existence to some cause exterior to itself ; that consequently there exists, outside and independent of contingent beings, a Being that is not contingent ; a Being whose nature is *altogether different* from that of contingent beings ; a Being who has in Himself the reason of His existence and Himself sustains it, intrinsically and inalienably. Such in a word is the Being we call the *necessary* Being, and it is easy to understand that this Being should have called into existence all contingent beings ; all those creatures whose very contingency has served to reveal to us the existence and the perfection of their Author. For, by the very necessity of His being, He is necessarily perfect, almighty — as may be seen from a simple analysis of the concept of the « necessity of being », « self-subsistence » or « aseity ».

Now it is clear that God, the Creator of all things other than Himself, could not have had any motive other than Himself in creating them ; Himself, His glory, the outward manifestation of His perfections to our intelligence ; nor any other intention than that of subordinating our wills to the law of His love and to the duty of respect for His Holy Will. « The Lord hath

made all things for himself ¹ ». This, my dear brothers, must be the key of our highest intentions and the supreme purpose we must set before our minds; this we must aim at, « *in-tendere* »; this we must wish for and love with all our hearts and manfully strive to attain. This alone is what we were made for; nor could there be any other end for the existence of an intelligent creature.

Look then straight ahead towards your last end. Fix your minds on God, and on *God alone*. See Him alone in all things. Is not this in fact the aspiration that comes from our hearts and lips every day at the dawn? — « *Regi saeculorum, immortalis et invisibili, soli Deo honor et gloria in saecula saeculorum* : To God alone, the King of Ages, Immortal and Invisible, be honour and glory for ever and ever ». Provided we keep the eye of the soul thus fixed on God alone, we shall be filled with a heaven-sent light; but if we strive to keep in view both God and creatures our vision will be dim and darkness will envelop us. — If thy eye be single, thy whole body will be lightsome: but if thy eye be evil, thy body also will be darksome ² —.

¹ *Universa propter semetipsum operatus est Dominus.* — Prov. XVI, 4.

² *Si oculus tuus fuerit simplex, totum corpus tuum lucidum erit: si autem malus fuerit, etiam corpus tuum tenebrosus erit.* — Luke, XI, 34.

Not of course that we can always be *actually* thinking of God ; nor does He require this of us. All He asks is that our minds be *habitually* directed to Him : which means simply this, that if at any moment of the day one were to ask us unexpectedly « For whom are you working ? For what motive are you studying ? Why are you taking recreation » ? we should always be able to answer with truth : « I am working, studying, resting, to promote as best I can the interests of the glory of God ». It is to this ideal of moral elevation and interior purity that the Church invites us when on the feast of St. Jane Frances de Chantal She addresses this prayer to God in our behalf : « Pour into us, O Lord, the spirit of thy charity, that by the intercession of blessed Jane Frances, thou mayest enable those whom thou hast replenished with the strength of celestial food to despise earthly things, and with pure minds to seek after thee alone ¹ ».

Vigilate : Watch. — Set a guard on your *imagination*. That you be not seduced by the allurements of things forbidden, take care not to expose yourselves to impressions that enervate the soul, to thoughts that nourish anger and ill-feeling, or foment pride, ambition, or envy.

¹ *Spiritum nobis, Domine, tue caritatis infunde : ut, quos coelestis panis virtute satiasti, beata Joanna Francisca intercedente, facias terrena despicere, et te solum Deum pura mente sectari*
— Postcom. Missae.

Place a guard too upon your *reason* : protect it from the false opinions of the world ; from the frivolous, fashionable errors that are in opposition to the Gospel ; from pernicious fancies which, masquerading in the garb of science or historical criticism, pervert the deposit of the faith and undermine all respect for the authority of the Church. Set a guard lastly upon your *will* : preserve it from sloth, indolence, routine ; from that deplorable spirit of practical indifference which, in such a variety of forms, is paralyzing so many energies and wasting such precious opportunities for good. Be watchful over yourselves ; be watchful too over your passions. It is not without reason that ecclesiastical tradition has designated as « bishop » ἐπίσκοπος, « overseer », him whose first duty is to watch over, and provide for, the interests of souls. You are his co-operators : yours it is, therefore, to share in his watchfulness.

Orate : Pray. — In the next place you must pray : *Orate*. This word does not mean merely, or even chiefly : say prayers. Of course you must say prayers, and especially during your Retreat, with all possible fervour : you must repeat with untiring earnestness your appeals to the mercy and goodness of our Father in Heaven. We are told that St. Alphonsus loved to kneel quite near the tabernacle, and that when

his prayers were not granted as promptly as he wished, he even dared to knock at the very door of the Eucharistic prison, and to say with a childlike, yet reverent, audacity « My Jesus, dost thou not hear me ? » This artless daring of God's saints, contrasting so sharply with our conventional piety, is something that surely calls for more than mere passive admiration. It is not, however, the point to which I wished particularly to draw your attention here. Rather would I recommend to you under the rubric of prayer, what St. Thomas Aquinas calls *devotedness to God*, *devotion*, DEVOTIO. « Devotion, » says the holy Doctor, « is that disposition of soul which inclines us to give ourselves up cheerfully to the service of God ¹. »

When the eye of your soul, becoming more and more pure, has grown accustomed to see in God its only object in life ; when, by watching over your senses and imagination, you have loosed the chains that would impede the flight of your higher faculties heavenwards, and surmounted the barriers that would prevent you from uniting yourselves with your Sovereign Lord ; then throw yourselves into His arms, offer up and abandon yourselves wholly and for ever

¹ *Voluntas promptę quędam tradendi se ad ea quę pertinent ad Dei famulatum.* — II^a II^{ae}, q. 82, a. 1.

to His service. Let all your desires be centred in Him ; withdraw them courageously from creatures. Is not this what we pray for at the altar after holy communion : « Refreshed with the food of spiritual nourishment, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord, that by partaking of this mystery we may be taught to despise what is earthly and love what is heavenly ? ¹ »

Is it not likewise the sum of all the asceticism of the *Imitation* : « This is the highest wisdom ; by despising the world to make progress towards the Kingdom of Heaven. It is vanity to love what is passing away with all speed, and not to be hastening thither where endless joy abideth... Study therefore to wean thy heart from love of visible things, and to betake thee to the things unseen ? ² »

Lastly and especially, submit your whole will to God. There lies the kernel of all Christian

¹ *Repleti cibo spiritualis alimoniac, supplices te, Domine, deprecamur, ut hujus participatione mysterii, doceas nos terrena despiciere et amare coelestia.* Post-communion for and Sunday in Advent.

² *Ista est summa sapientia, per contemptum mundi tendere ad coelestia regna. Vanitas est, illud diligere quod cum omni celeritate transit et illuc non festinare, ubi gaudium sempiternum manet... Stude ergo cor tuum ab amore visibilium abstrahere et ad invisibilia transferre.* Imit. Jesu Christi, Lib. I. cap. I. 4 and 5.

morality, the secret and the fulfilment of all holiness. Whether the expression of God's will be made known by legitimate authority or by the voice of circumstances, it matters not : once you have recognized the will of Him to whom you have given yourself, incline submissively to it, prostrate yourself before it, obey it with all the alacrity of love. Even should you sometimes feel unable, when perhaps crushed under a weight of sorrow, to utter aught else but those submissive words of Christ in His agony, « Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt ¹ », even so, bow down your soul in submission ; cling still to the anchor of hope ; fix your eyes on Him who is the author and finisher of your faith, on Jesus « who having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God ². »

My dear friends, I have sought for a prayer that would tell us the use to make of the things that pass, and the price to set on the things that endure ; a prayer that would point out to us the goal whither to direct our steps, and at the same time remind us that if we are but wise-

¹ *Verumtamen, non mea sed tua voluntas fiat.* — Luke, XXII. 42.

² *Adspicietis in auctorem fidei et consummatorem Jesum, qui proposito sibi gaudio sustinuit crucem confusione contempta, atque in dextera Dei sedet.* — Hebr. XII. 2.

ly diffident of our own weakness we may hope for everything from the merciful protection of our good God. All this I have found condensed in the admirable Collect for the 3rd Sunday after Pentecost : « O God, the protection of those that hope in thee, without whom nothing is firm, nothing holy ; multiply upon us Thy mercy, that with Thee for our ruler and guide, we may so pass through temporal goods that we may not lose the eternal ¹. »

APPENDIX.

The reader will derive both pleasure and profit from a perusal of the entire thirteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Mark, the lessons of which the above discourse was intended to develop :

1. And as he was going out of the temple, one of his disciples saith to him : Master, behold what manner of stones, and what buildings *are here*.

2. And Jesus answering, said to him : Seest thou all these great buildings ? There shall not be left a stone upon a stone, that shall not be thrown down.

¹ *Protector in te sperantium Deus, sine quo nihil est validum, nihil sanctum : multiplica super nos misericordiam tuam ; ut te rectore, te duce, sic transeamus per bona temporalia, ut non amittamus aeterna.* — Oratio, Dom. III. post. Pent.

3. And as he sat on the mount of Olivet over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him apart :

4. Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall begin to be fulfilled ?

5. And Jesus answering, began to say to them, Take heed lest any man deceive you.

6. For many shall come in my name saying, I am he ; and they shall deceive many.

7. And when you shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, fear ye not. For such things must needs be, but the end is not yet.

8. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be earth-quakes, in *divers* places, and famines. These things *are* the beginning of sorrows.

9. But look to yourselves. For they shall deliver you up to councils, and in the synagogues you shall be beaten, and you shall stand before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony unto them.

10. And unto all nations the gospel must first be preached.

11. And when they shall lead you and deliver you up, be not thoughtful beforehand what you shall speak ; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye. For it is not you that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

12. And the brother shall betray his brother unto death, and the father his son ; and children shall rise up against the parents, and shall work their death.

13. And you shall be hated by all men for my name's sake. But he that shall endure unto the end, he shall be saved.

14. And when you shall see the abomination of desolation, standing where it ought not : he that readeth let him understand : then let them that are in Judea, flee unto the mountains.

15. And let him that is on the housetop, not go down into the house nor enter therein to take any thing out of the house.

16. And let him that shall be in the field, not turn back to take up his garment.

17. And wo to them that are with child, and that give suck in those days.

18. But pray ye, that *these things* happen not in winter.

19. For in those days shall be such tribulations as were not from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, neither shall be.

20. And unless the Lord had shortened the days, no flesh should be saved : but for the sake of the elect which he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

21. And then if any man shall say to you, Lo,

here is Christ ; lo, he is here : do not believe.

22. For there will rise up false christs and false prophets, and they shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce (if it were possible) even the elect.

23. Take you heed therefore ; behold I have foretold you all things.

24. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.

25. And the stars of heaven shall be falling down, and the powers, that are in heaven, shall be moved.

26. And then shall they see the son of man coming in the clouds, with great power and glory.

27. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

28. Now of the fig tree learn ye a parable. When the branch thereof is now tender, and the leaves are come forth, you know that summer is very near.

29. So you also when you shall see these things come to pass, know ye that it is very nigh, even at the doors.

30. Amen I say to you, that this generation shall not pass, until all these things be done.

31. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.

32. But of that day or hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father.

33. Take ye head, watch and pray. For ye know not when the time is.

34. Even as a man who going into a far country, left his house ; and gave authority to his servants over every work, and commanded the porter to watch.

35. Watch you therefore (for you know not when the lord of the house cometh : at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning).

36. Lest coming on a sudden, he find you sleeping.

37. And what I say to you I say to all : Watch.

FOURTH DISCOURSE.

DEATH AND THE SUPREME ALTERNATIVE.

- I. — **We** have all to die, and none can tell in what circumstances death will come upon him.
 - II. — Death snatches us from the transient things of time and confronts us suddenly with this supreme alternative : Hell or Heaven for all Eternity.
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FOURTH DISCOURSE.

DEATH AND THE SUPREME ALTERNATIVE.

Morte morieris : « Thou
shalt die the death. »

GEN. II. 17.

My dear brothers, You must have been struck yesterday at the persistence with which our Divine Saviour urged His apostles to fix their thoughts on the things that are beyond the present life ; to be ever on the watch against the dangers that threaten the soul ; to persevere in prayer with hearts ever turned towards our supreme End, ever bent on following faithfully the path that leads thereto. Were you surprised at these divine admonitions ? Who more than ourselves need to be brought face to face with death ? Give me, my dear friends, your undivided attention for a few moments. Fix your thought on this fact, which, to minds less discerning than yours, would seem inexplicable : we priests touch death at almost every turn, and yet

I think there are few people in the world who reflect on it less than many among us. At every step you are in contact with death. When you go from your presbytery to the church, or back again, you can scarcely avoid treading upon human dust. Seldom you pass a day without preparing some sick person for a happy death ; you administer the last sacraments, you anoint his members with the holy oil ; and when you have helped him to say : « Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul ; Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist me in my last agony ; Jesus, Mary and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you, » when you have received his last breath, you recite over his mortal remains the prayers for the dead ; you place a crucifix entwined with a rosary between the cold hands of the deceased ; and often, like the holy Tobias, you lend your charitable aid in conveying to its last resting place the lifeless body — a body which you yourself perhaps had made a temple of the Holy Ghost in Baptism. Your church is draped in black ; a catafalque is erected before the altar ; the coffin rests there, and you sing the Requiem Mass, with the *Libera* and the *Absolutio*. Then, intoning with your fellow priests the anthem *In Paradisum*, and reciting with them the verses of the *Misere-re*, you move slowly to the cemetery, where

the faithful sleep until the resurrection day. How is it then that lessons so solemn, so deep in meaning, and occurring so frequently, make such a light impression on those who attend them and who take such direct and active part in them?

It is precisely because they do recur so frequently that they impress so little. It is an instance of the old adage, *Ab assuetis non fit passio*, or even perhaps of the stronger saying, *Familiarity breeds contempt*. We no longer notice what we see every day. You must have made the discovery that the best way to become really acquainted with an edifice to which you often resort is to take a stranger to see it. His remarks and questions will reveal to you details that you had never noticed. So it is with the spectacle of death. It is too familiar to you to arrest your attention with any degree of interest. Yet, my dear brothers, you too will die; and it is not unlikely that you will be more surprised than others when some courageous friend tells you that Death is about to claim you; but neither your terror nor your tardy regrets will turn back the great Reaper: « *Morte morieris*. Thou shalt die the death. » You also, then, must think of your last end. Nay, it is doubly urgent that *you* should think of it, for you are responsible not

only for your own soul, but for the souls of your flock ; and as you know very well, for both the Gospel and Christian tradition remind you of it, man must think on death and eternity to keep himself out of sin ; « In all thy works remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin ¹. »

My dear brothers, since you have to conquer the natural tendency to put away the thought of death, you will agree with me that you need to make a special effort during this half hour to keep your minds fixed on these two truths : truths with which you are already as familiar as I am ; you preach them constantly to others ; let them henceforth sink deeply into your hearts, so that they may become effectual :

I. *We have all to die, and none can tell in what circumstances death will come upon him.*

II. *Death snatches us from the transient things of time and confronts us suddenly with this supreme alternative : Hell or Heaven, and for all Eternity.*

¹ *In omnibus operibus tuis, memorare novissima tua et in aeternum non peccabis. — Eccl. VII. 40.*

I.

WE HAVE ALL TO DIE AND NONE CAN TELL IN
WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES
DEATH WILL COME UPON HIM.

The fact of your death is beyond doubt; nor do you dream of doubting it. There have been dreamers and quibblers who dared to question the most incontestable truths; I know of no sane man who ever went so far as to assert that the men of his generation would be exempt from death any more than those of preceding generations. In his *Dialogues Philosophiques*, Renan fancifully pictures a future in which science will have discovered the means of averting death: we may let that fancy pass: until the secret of immortality be found, men will go on dying: Renan died; so too shall we.

Picture to yourselves the death of some one whom you have intimately known and loved; your father or mother; your brother or sister, or a bosom friend. You have seen this friend full of life, strength and vigour, smiling buoyantly on the future. But a day came when perhaps a secret was confided to you by his doctor: an incurable malady was undermining his vigourous constitution. You began to notice him wasting away, languishing, drooping in health and spirits; yet while those around him were giving up all hope of his

recovery, he himself suspected little, if at all, the gravity of his condition. But you armed yourself with Christian courage, and taking every possible precaution you gently broke the truth to him : you told him that he must prepare to receive the last Sacraments ; and you saw from his sudden agitation how far he had been from realizing his condition. He resigned himself, however, and you had the comfort of seeing him receive the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction « Receive, O Brother, the viaticum of the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that He may guard thee from the wicked enemy and lead thee into life eternal ». « Through this holy anointing and through His tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatever sin thou hast committed by thy sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, movements, or concupiscence of the flesh ». Soon the sick man is in the throes of death ; beads of cold sweat stand upon his pallid brow ; a soothing hand bathes his temples and tries to lessen the pain of his failing members. The silence grows more intense around the bed of death ; a few relatives and friends, a nursing sister, the doctor, the priest, stand motionless, their eyes fixed on the sufferer. A tremor shakes the poor human frame : a creature has yielded up his last breath to his Creator. The household is plunged in grief ; the priest concludes the prayers for the dying and in deep and reverent recollec-

tion recites the office for the Dead. The departed soul has already appeared before God : It is judged.

People come and go in that house of death ; those that were near and dear wander about distraught, unnerved at this new and strange thought that he whose remains lie stiffening upon that couch is gone for ever, is dead ; that he must be buried : laid in a coffin and carried from his home to-morrow or the day after, never to return. O Death, what cruel separations dost thou bring into the life of man ! Why should we so deeply love if we are to part so soon ?

Now we can only cherish the memory of the lost one : never, surely shall we forget him ; we even reproach ourselves with having too little understood his worth till he was taken from us. Ah, my Brothers, this too is an illusion, perhaps the last of our illusions. We speedily forget ; we are speedily forgotten. Tell me frankly, your hands on your hearts, among your own departed ones who are they of whom you cherish a lively and abiding remembrance ? You are faithful to the memory of your mother, of your father, if you have had the misfortune to lose them ; you still perhaps give an occasional thought to your grand-parents ; but have their parents any place in your thoughts ?...

Your departed one is in eternity ; he is no longer of this world. It is your turn now to consider within yourself that you too will die. As he has disappeared, so will you. Oh, I know well you flatter yourself it will not be very soon. When death carries off a person well known to us, we always manage to discover in his case something that reassures us about ourselves : our poor friend little suspected it, but he had heart disease ; there was consumption in his family ; he overworked himself ; he had every appearance of a man who might be struck down by apoplexy. And so, without quite realizing it, we go on accounting to ourselves for the death of others, fondly imagining ourselves immune from the maladies to which they succumbed, until we drift into the delusion that we are not to be weighed in the same scale with those who die daily around us. For the instinct of self-preservation so dominates our existence that we shrink from the spectacle of death and lull ourselves into hopes of a long life. The fact remains, however, that whether we think of death or not, we shall one day surely die. The very words I have spoken in sorrow about my departed friend, « He is no more, he is dead, » will be spoken of each one of us. The day will come when the word will pass round about you and about me : « He is dead ». The funeral knell will toll ;

friends, many or few, will gather around my coffin and follow it to the grave ; my body will be laid in the tomb ; and when for the last time the priest will have repeated over my coffin, already covered with earth, this prayer for eternal peace : « May his soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace, » the friends and acquaintances will disperse. As they came to my funeral they talked no doubt for a short while about my death, about the illness or accident that caused it, about their sorrow or surprise at the news of my decease ; then each one went home with his thoughts on the future, his heart and mind gliding easily back into the customary groove of ordinary interests and occupations. Yes, thoughts of death are austere and disquieting : « Mortals », says Bossuet, « are no less anxious to brush them aside than they are to bury their dead ¹ ».

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The fact that I shall die is therefore certain beyond all doubt. But all the circumstances that will attend my death are uncertain. When shall I quit this world ? I know not. *Where* shall I die ? At home in the bosom of my family, sur-

¹ *Carême du Louvre*, Sermons sur la Mort. Ed. Lebarq, IV, p. 161.

rounded by friends and neighbours ? Or on a journey abroad, on the public road, among strangers ? I know not. *How* shall I die ? A natural death after some illness, long or short ? Or from a railway accident ? Or struck by lightening ? Or by the hand of a criminal ? I cannot say. Shall I have a priest to absolve me in my last moments, or shall I die alone ? Shall I be conscious, or shall I die of some disease that will suddenly or slowly have darkened my intellect and paralyzed my will ? Any of these suppositions may be realized. We can neither predict nor set aside any of them.

But this one thing *is* certain : death will come as a *surprise* to me. If we are daily witnesses of death, its very familiarity, as we saw, will put us off our guard. If we live absorbed in study or the cares of office, secluded from those scenes where the Destroyer is busiest, we seldom stop to cast a thought on its daily ravages. Some six thousand people die all over the world in the course of one hour ; every minute sees about a hundred deaths ; over four millions fall every month under the scythe of the great Reaper ; fifty-one millions — about the whole population of a large European country — are swept away every year in the devastating torrent... Yet, who thinks of it ?... But our Divine Saviour has forewarned us : « At what hour you

think not, the son of man will come ; » ¹ « be you then also ready. » Yet death, when it does come, is usually unexpected. I appeal to your own experience. Do you often in your priestly career meet with sick people who are sincerely convinced that they are going to die, that their death is imminent ? I know of course that many in time of serious illness fear their lives are in danger, but do even they believe themselves in real earnest to be beyond hope of recovery ? Let them feel but the slightest relief, let their temperature fall but half a degree, and do you not notice that they begin to hope even against hope ? Again it is the instinct of self-preservation, innate in the heart of man, that is trying to silence the dictates of cold reason ; while the solicitude of friends and their earnest desire for our recovery are usually in league with the promptings of that instinct.

So then, we are to die ; and death will come at a time and in circumstances unknown to us ; in all probability, too, it will take us by surprise. But no ; it is not enough to say we *shall die* : rather, the truth is, in the striking words of Bossuet, we *are dying*. We are here assembled, about two hundred and fifty in number : you

¹ *Et vos estote parati, quia qua hora non putatis, Filius hominis veniet.* — Luke, XII. 40. Cf. Matt. XXIV. 43.

seem to be motionless before me, and I before you : in the sense that each keeps his place, and so seems for the moment to be absolutely fixed and stationary. But it is really not so ! Every particle of our organism is in motion, struggling against extraneous influences, and the body continues to live only on condition that its perpetual losses through wear and tear be continuously repaired. « Life », says Claude Bernard, « is the sum of the functions that resist death. » By such a paradoxical definition the eminent scientist tried but to emphasize the fact that our vitality is maintained only through the uninterrupted re-assimilation of substances to replace the constant losses entailed by the wear and tear of organic tissue. But a day will come when the body will be worn out by this unequal struggle against the forces of external nature ; or rather it is wearing itself out daily, so that if one could see beneath its surface and calculate its power of resistance, he could foretell the date at which it must inevitably succumb. « When we compare this fleeting life to eternity, » says St. Gregory, « we see that the true name for it is death rather than life, for what is the daily disintegration of the living body but a protracted death ¹ ? »

¹ « *Temporalis vita aeternae vitae comparata, mors est potius*

« What then, O great God ! is my substance ? » exclaims Bossuet, « I have come into life only to leave it after a little while ; I show myself like others, and then I must disappear. All things beckon us towards death : Nature, as if grudging us the good things she gives, is ever intimating in countless ways that she cannot leave us long in possession of this handful of clay she has lent to us ; that by evolution it must pass into other forms and be claimed for other uses. That incessant stream from which the race is ever recruited, the children that are daily born, seem as they grow up to youth and manhood to shoulder us out, and say : « Move on, you have had your day ; it is our turn now. » And so, just as we see others pass away before us, we shall also be seen to pass away by those who in their turn will present the self-same spectacle to their successors. O God ! once more I cry ; what are we ? If I look out before me what a vast space there is in which I am not ! If I look behind what an immensity there is which knows me not ! And so tiny a point do I occupy in the immeasurable abyss of time that I am well nigh nothing ! I have been sent only to count as

dicenda quam vita. Ipse enim quotidianus defectus corruptionis quid est aliud quam quaedam prolixitas mortis. » S. Gregorii. Hom. XXXVII in Evangelia.

a unit among millions, and even so I was not needed ; the world's drama would have been acted had I remained behind the scenes¹. »

II.

DEATH SNATCHES US FROM THE TRANSIENT THINGS
OF TIME AND CONFRONTS US SUDDENLY
WITH THIS SUPREME ALTERNATIVE : HELL OR
HEAVEN FOR ALL ETERNITY.

So then I shall die, but I know neither where, nor when, nor how ; or, to be more accurate, *I am* dying. What does dying mean ?

Friday evening will find you back to your respective parishes. Suppose that on Saturday, at your usual hour for confessions, you are lying in bed seriously ill. The doctor has been summoned to your bedside. Your confessor, a priest from a neighbouring parish, has been sent for and has just arrived. He tells you firmly that though the doctor has hopes of your recovery there are complications to be feared, and that you would do well to make your final preparations. Your will has been made : on this score your mind is at ease and your friends can be

¹ Bossuet. *Carême du Louvre*. 4^e Semaine, Lebarq, IV. p. 168.

reassured. You make your last confession ; you ask for the Viaticum and Extreme Unction. Some relatives, a few intimate friends, a few pious parishioners, all deeply agitated, have been present at the holy ceremony. They withdraw in tears ; they turn to the church, and before the tabernacle they implore God to leave with them yet awhile their brother, their friend, their pastor.

Meanwhile you have asked to be left alone ; you want to recollect yourself. You look out into the void that is about to envelop you with a presentiment of the coming crisis. During your Retreat you had formed projects : you will never carry them out. You had planned and begun some good work, a school, perhaps, or a sodality : you will never finish it. The furniture around you will soon be yours no longer. There are some things to which you cling : your books, a picture, a crucifix, a few heirlooms ; soon they will cease to be yours. You will leave the house you live in. That church which was your dearest joy, where for many a long year you spent the happiest hours of your days, where you catechized the children, preached to your parishioners, heard confessions and administered baptism, where you prayed and poured out your troubles into the Heart of your Divine Saviour, burying in Its depths the remembrance of your sins and of the sorrows inseparable from

your pastoral charge, — that church already seems far away from you : in all likelihood you will never enter it again — except in your coffin.

As these heavy thoughts oppress your mind you become more feverish and restless ; your breathing is now more laboured ; the nursing sister places the blessed candle in your hand, and the attending priest begins the prayers for the agonising. Now your sight grows dim ; a glassy look comes into your eyes ; you cannot move nor swallow ; you can hardly breathe ; a moment, and all the organs cease to act : then of a sudden comes the final crash, and the soul, violently wrenched from the body it had animated, finds itself *alone*, absolutely alone in the presence of God. *Death !* Yes, there it is : the separation of the soul from all the man possessed, his parting from all that he enjoyed ; the cessation of everything that hitherto seemed to him to form the tangible portion or complement of his very personality. Death is the destruction of the man and the abandonment of his *soul* to itself. In an instant, shorter than is needed to tell it, the soul passes from its life of probation into its eternal abode.

Flooded by a sudden, mysterious light, the precise nature of which theologians seek to ascertain, the disembodied soul sees — and at once, without effort, with a clearness that leaves no trace of

doubt — two things : on the one hand, the long series of graces God had given it during its earthly state ; on the other, the use or misuse it made of each one of them. And the harmony or the contrast between the graces received and the acts for which they were intended, bursts upon the soul with such transparent clearness that it instantly judges itself whether it be worthy of reward and love, or of reprobation and punishment.

O terrible moment ! There is for each human soul only one terrible moment : and it is this. So long as man has the breath of life, were he the most hardened of criminals, he need not really fear, for, if he only wills, Divine Mercy is always ready to receive him ; he has but to throw himself into its depths and there discipline his heart by penance, and he will rise up pardoned, purified, and fit for the joys of heaven. But the soul once departed, and the earthly life laid bare for judgment ¹, there is no more room for either hope or fear : one single virtue will hold supreme sway in the soul and beatify it, or else will be absent from it and so condemn it to unutterable despair : the virtue of charity.

At present — that is, as long as we are on earth

¹ *Judex ergo cum sedebit, quidquid latet apparebit, nil inultum remanebit.*

faith, hope and charity have all three their *raison d'être* : « And now there remain, faith, hope, charity, these three ¹ » ; but then also, in our present state we are only children and we speak and judge as children ; whereas, when we reach our full manhood, we shall put away all the imperfections of infancy and we shall be confirmed once for all in perfection, that is, in charity ².

On the other hand, the soul that at the hour of death and judgment is without charity, will see its incapacity to possess God, and will itself judge itself lost. The pain of loss — i. e. of « damnation » : *poena damni* — is simply the manifestation, to the lost soul, of the utter incompatibility between the condition of that soul which, fixed immutably in its destiny, loves not God, and the possession by that soul of God who is the only good that survives the disappearance of all ephemeral existences. Just as in our planetary system the sun so attracts the earth and the other planets that if their centrifugal force were to fail they would rush straight into the sun

¹ *Nunc autem manent fides, spes, caritas, tria hæc.* — I. Cor. XIII, 13.

² *Cum autem venerit quod perfectum est, evacuabitur quod ex parte est. Cum essem parvulus, loquebar ut parvulus, sapiebam ut parvulus, cogitabam ut parvulus ; quando autem factus sum vir, evacuavi quæ erant parvuli.... nunc autem manent fides, spes, caritas, tria hæc ; major autem horum est caritas.* — ibid. 10-13.

and coalesce with that great central mass, so if the law of probation, imposed on our free will in this life, did not keep the soul at a distance from its centre, it would cast itself on the Infinite and unite itself with Him as with the only Good to which its nature is capable of adhering ultimately, the only Principle of its full and final perfection : « The final perfection of every thing whatsoever », says St. Thomas Aquinas, « lies in the attainment of its end ¹. The ultimate perfection to which any thing can attain is this, that it be united with its principle ² ».

The concluding words of Dante's poem express the same thought : « It is love that moves the sun in heaven and all the stars ³ ».

Dear brothers, let us consider, I pray you, in what the essential fate of a lost soul consists. With all the energy of its whole being it tends towards God, the Absolute Good, — the final and only

¹ *Ultima perfectio uniuscujusque rei est in consecutione finis.* — *Sum. Theol.* I. V. 103, art. I. c.

² *Ultima perfectio ad quam res potest pervenire est hanc ut conjungatur suo principio.* — 2. *Dist.*, 18, q. 2, a. 2, *Solutio*.

³ Ma già volgeva il mio desiro e il velle,
Si come ruota ch'igualmente è mossa,
L'Amor che muove il sole e l'altre stelle.

(Parad : XXXIII, 143-145).

Good, indeed, since everything that is not God has its existence solely as a means for Himself, and destined for His glory. Now by death the soul is separated from all those created things that could for a time satisfy its passing needs ; for the moment it is even deprived of those faculties of possessing and enjoying which its union with an earthly body secured for it. Whence it follows that the seeming satisfaction it derived from the chance sources along the path of its earthly pilgrimage, pleasures that afforded at best but a passing illusion of happiness, has now simply ceased to be possible for it in its disembodied state. But on the other hand it has deliberately turned away from God, the true and only Good, by fixing itself in the state of sin : it has made it impossible for God to give Himself to it. Only another period of mutable existence, a fresh trial of its free will on earth could make possible its return to the love of God. But since it is imperative that Divine Wisdom have the last word in its conflict with the creature in revolt, the trial cannot be prolonged indefinitely ; and since this is so, it certainly belongs to God to fix the limit of it Himself.

Behold, then the limit fixed for the soul's probation period : the term of its natural life on earth. This term once reached, time for the soul is at an end : *Tempus non erit amplius*. Its course through transient things is run : where the tree has fallen

there will it lie. The soul, therefore, that has refused to love God, that is found without love for Him at the moment of death, will find no earthly things within its reach, nor, even if it did, has it now any corporeal faculties wherewith to enjoy them. And on the other hand it will be radically incapable of embracing the uncreated Good : for to love, to be in union with its Beloved, means to turn its will freely towards Him : whereas the lost soul has deliberately turned away from Him that faculty of love which it was free to give or to withhold.

The Supreme Judge is the rightful victor. The soul He judges and condemns is forced to confess His justice : « To thee only have I sinned and have done evil before thee : that thou mayest be justified in thy words, and mayest overcome when thou art judged ¹ ».

O my God, could it be that there are souls of priests in hell ? Could we bear to think of the soul of one of those now here in retreat as deprived eternally of the happiness of loving God ? Eternally condemned to hear in the depth of his conscience the torturing reproach of rejected love : « What more could I do for thee that I have not done ? I planted thee a most beautiful vine,

¹ *Tibi soli peccavi et malum coram te feci, ut justificeris in sermonibus tuis et vincas cum judicaris. — Ps. I. 5.*

and thou hast proved exceeding bitter to me ; for in my thirst thou gavest me vinegar to drink and with a spear thou hast pierced the side of thy Saviour ¹ ».

For all eternity the soul of a reprobate priest will bear the indelible mark of the sacramental character : *Tu es sacerdos in aeternum*, thou art a priest for ever. Will not this very thought, « I had every facility for saving my soul and I have damned myself », be a hell in itself ? And must not this other thought, « I accepted the mission and enjoyed the means of saving others, and through my hypocrisy or cowardice they are lost », make the fate of the lost priest a hell within a hell ?

But let us lay aside, dear friends, these fearful thoughts. Hell is not for us. Even here below, our souls are in touch with heaven ; with the apostle, Paul, we can say : « our conversation is in heaven ² ». Yes, it must be so with us. We must make it so. Our faith must give us the firm assurance that death will have no such terrors for us.

¹ *Quid ultra debui facere tibi et non feci ? Ego quidem plantavi te vineam meam speciosissimam : et tu facta es mihi nimis amara : aceto namque sitim meam potasti : et lancea perforasti latus salvatori tuo. — Officium feriae sextae in Parasceve.*

² *Nostra autem conversatio in coelis est. — Phil. III, 20.*

But death will surely come upon us : it may even now be at our doors. When it does come we shall pass in the twinkling of an eye from time to eternity. The supreme alternative will present itself to us no less than to our flock : to the right or to the left, heaven or hell, throughout the endless ages of eternity.

Try to imagine a period of time composed of as many centuries as there are grains of sand on the sea shore, drops of water in the ocean, leaves in the forests, stars in the heavens ; multiply this prodigious number by itself as many times as there are units in it ; and then say to your soul that if it be among the blessed its bliss will be unabated after all these centuries, but that if it be lost its punishment will have scarcely begun... But no, it were better to cease finding false comparisons : the eternity of rewards and punishments is beyond all computation in time. Comparisons of time with eternity do but falsify the reality : Centuries are but fractions of time, eternity is outside of time, beyond time. Strive, rather, to grasp in thought one indivisible instant, the one that links the past that is gone with a future that is near but not yet come ; catch this instant and pin it down if I may say so, and suppose that while everything around it passes, it alone remains unchanged : like such an ever-present instant is the endless duration of

eternity. The supreme alternative that confronts the soul at death is, then, either an eternity of happiness through the satisfaction of all the aspirations of the human heart, or an eternity of woe through loss of everything the heart of man can desire !

An eternity of happiness ! Your hearts are naturally drawn towards your own kith and kin ; you would wish never to be separated from them : you will meet them all in heaven, all of them who are really deserving of your affection, all of them who have not bartered for a miserable nothing the highest destiny of their souls. You have made friends in life, friends whose intimate intercourse and confidence you enjoy. All upright friendships, in which the creature does not usurp the place of the Creator, will there continue, purer and nobler still, in the society of the elect. You love your spiritual children ; nothing do you deem too precious for them : you give them freely of your slender means, of your time, of your strength ; you live for them alone. With what joy you would lead them all to Jesus Christ ! In heaven, dear fellow-workers, all who will have received your ministrations, were it only at their very last hour, will form a brilliant company around you, and the saints of past ages will be with you and you with them.

You remember with what enthusiasm you sang

on days of solemn thanksgiving : « To thee the cherubim and seraphim continually cry : Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory. The glorious choir of the apostles, the admirable company of the prophets, the white-robed army of martyrs, praise thee. The Holy Church throughout all the world doth confess thee » ¹. And how your piety would uplift you and fill you with the longing desire to unite your voices one day with those of the triumphal hosts of Heaven. That day will come. We too, humble sinners who hope in the Divine Mercy, shall be admitted to share the society of the Apostles and Martyrs : « And to us sinners, thy servants, hoping in the multitude of thy mercies, vouchsafe to grant some part and fellowship with thy apostles and martyrs » ² ; we shall see SS. Peter and Paul, Andrew, John and James ; and the early popes, Linus, Cletus, Clement ; and the early martyrs, Stephen, Lawrence, Ignatius, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, whose names we repeat every morning in the Canon of the Mass ; and our holy fellow-workers in the priesthood, St. Philip Neri, St. Francis de Sales, St. Vincent de Paul, the Curé of Ars, and those whom our motherland

¹ Hymn, *Te Deum*.

² Canon of the Mass.

has given us to venerate with a special devotion : SS. Rumold, Libertus, Lutgarda, Juliana, St. John Berchmans, the Blessed Ruysbroeck ; these will be our constant companions ; our affections will go out to them, and they will condescend to welcome us as equals without letting us feel the weight of their superiority.

And Thou, above all, O Mary our good Mother, whose statue we used to adorn in our childhood ; whose privileged shrines we loved to visit ; whose medals we loved to wear ; whom, from our mother's knees to our deathbed, we hailed so often as « full of grace » and as « blessed among women » ; Thee we shall see honoured by all the saints and, in the light of Thy glory, we shall recognize Thee as the Immaculate, who alone among creatures wast never an alien from God. In heaven as on earth, O Queen of Saints, Thou wilt lead us to Jesus ; and at last we shall apprehend in all their beauty the divine mysteries by whose splendour we are dazzled here on earth : Jesus as Man ; Jesus as God ; Jesus the God-Man ; the Trinity of Persons, the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, in one only God ; the divine governance of the worlds ; the wisdom of Providence ; the blending of the contrasts between good and evil into one universal harmony ; the glories of our Faith ; the removal of our doubts ; the answers to all our anxious

questionings — all will burst upon us as an ocean of truth and beauty in the final revelation of the glory of our God. All these heavenly wonders we shall enjoy in undisturbed peace, without misgiving or fear, in the full knowledge that henceforth nothing can rob us of our joy, that our past sins no longer dim our vision of God, that no false note will ever mar the harmony of the voices that will join in the eternal canticle : « Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Hosanna in the highest ».

Such is the bliss that awaits us.

But how inconceivable then, too, must be the torment of the soul that is buried in hell and has lost all hope of ever attaining to that bliss ! Oh ! the fearful alternative ! Heaven or Hell ! and for Eternity !...

And it is being all decided *now*, during the handful of fugitive years at our disposal on this earth ! Do we realize it ?

I once heard a missionary priest make the following comparison to bring home this truth to his hearers : A rich landowner in America, he said, comes to recruit settlers and takes them with him to the States to cultivate a large property there. He draws up an agreement with them. Here, he says to them, is some preliminary work that you are to do during the

five days' voyage, designs, measurements, sorting of samples, etc., Each will have his task on the voyage assigned to him. On your arrival in America those who have worked assiduously will be part-owners with me of the land we are to occupy ; the others will be mere slaves who can never have any hope of bettering their condition. » What fools, you say, those would be who in such circumstances would refuse five days' toil ! Yet five days count for something in a man's life !... But what are fifty, sixty even eighty years compared with Eternity ?... And what is an earthly estate compared with the Kingdom of Heaven ?... Fool, then, ten thousand times fool, is he who sacrifices his eternal happiness for an ephemeral gratification of sensuality or pride !

« For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul ? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul ? » ¹

CONCLUSION.

Not one among us is deliberately ill-disposed.

The danger to our souls is want of thought.

¹ « *Quid enim prodest homini si mundum universum lucretur, animae vero suae detrimentum patiatur ? Aut quam dabit homo commutationem pro anima sua ?* — » Matt. XVI, 26.

Recall the parable of the ten virgins. The bridegroom had foretold his coming but had not said whether it would be « at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning. » ¹ Lulled by this uncertainty, five foolish virgins neglect to provide themselves with oil. But suddenly, at midnight, the bridegroom appears. The foolish virgins run to those that were wiser, asking for a share of their oil ; but the wise virgins answer : « Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you, go you rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. » They hurry away to purchase the oil, but when they return they find the door of the banquet-hall closed : *clausa est janua*. In vain they cry out : « Lord, Lord, open to us ». Then comes the answer of justice, terrible and relentless : « Amen, I say to you, I know you not : *Amen, dico vobis, nescio vos.* » ²

My dear friends, how often and earnestly you yourselves warn your people against saying : « To-morrow, to-morrow. » For who knows, you say to them, but that morrow, when it comes may be *too late* ! Apply this thought to yourselves to-day. You are here in retreat for the *sole* and express purpose of attending to the interests of

¹ Mark, XIII. 35.

² Matt. XXV. 1-13.

your own immortal souls and preparing for that dread passage from time into eternity. Nothing demands your attention just now but the solving of this capital problem, this one only problem of life : the question of your eternal salvation. Do not count on any better opportunity than this : you *could not possibly* conceive, or secure, a better one. You are in full possession of your faculties, intellect and will ; you have all the leisure conducive to reflection ; you are surrounded with the richest of graces ; a confessor is waiting to absolve you : what, then, could possibly justify you in making further delay ? You will not, therefore. I am sure, postpone the examining of your souls and settling the great question. Remember, it is you yourselves who must, and it is yourselves alone who can, settle it. As St. Alphonsus Liguori repeats so often and so emphatically, the affair of your salvation is a purely *personal* affair. The wise virgins could not make good what was wanting in the foolish ones. Each one must save himself.

That question once settled, you will henceforth be faithfully guided by your resolve. It must be the loadstar of your life ; and knowing that you have chosen the right road you will tread it with a light and fearless step. Why, after all, should you fear death ? Cardinal Deschamps used to say : « Your body is like

a wall that prevents your soul from seeing God. He is quite near you ; He is your protector and says to you as He said to Abraham, that He wants to be your reward : Fear not, I am thy protector, and thy reward exceeding great. » ¹ As soon then as the wall falls — and death will knock it down — you will see God face to face.

If, dear Brother, you fear death, I know it is not through attachment to the goods of this life ; you no longer care for things that pass ; you have detached your hearts from them. It is rather, I think, because you are not quite sure that you have been sufficiently faithful to grace to meet your Supreme Judge without alarm. « *Quid sum miser tunc dicturus, quem patronum rogaturus, cum vix justus sit securus ?* Or perhaps the thought of Purgatory makes you tremble.

Yes, I quite understand your uneasiness : it is shared by whoever reflects on the unworthiness of his own past life. But do you forget then what the most High God answers every evening when you ask Him to shelter and protect you under the cover of His wings ? » Because he hoped in me [clung to me] I will deliver him : I will protect him because he hath known my name. He shall cry to me, and I will hear him : I am

¹ *Noli timere, ego, Abram, ego protector tuus sum et ero merces tua magna nimis. Gen. XV. 1.)*

with him in tribulation, I will deliver him and I will glorify him. I will fill [feed] him with length of days : and I will show him my salvation » ¹. Put no trust in your personal merits ; there is no really safe support but in Jesus Christ, our merciful Saviour. « *Rex tremendae Majestatis, qui salvandos salvas gratis, salva me fons pietatis.* Regret that you have loved the good God so little ; do all you can to love Him more and more ; and put your whole trust in His word : « Because he hoped in me I will deliver him.. »

Nature, it is true, abhors the disruption wrought by death. But even this natural revulsion will be weakened according as you habituate yourself to the thought that this disintegration is but the necessary condition of a higher union. Did not Our Divine Saviour die ? Had not His holy mother to submit to death ? Is it not fitting then that our bodies, stained as they are by sin, should be decomposed, so that we may again assume them incorruptible, and glorious, and worthy of the heavenly life that God has reserved for His elect ? « Who will grant me that my words may be written with an iron

¹ *Quoniam in me speravit [mihi adhaesit], liberabo eum : protegam eum, quoniam cognovit nomen meum. Clamabit ad me et ego exaudiam eum : cum ipso sum in tribulatione, eripiam eum et glorificabo eum. Longitudine dierum replebo eum [satiabo eum], et ostendam illi salutare meum.* — Ps. XC. 14-16.

pen and in a plate of lead, or else be graven with an instrument in flint-stone. For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God. Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another: this my hope is laid up in my bosom. » Job XIX. 23, 27. ¹

Perhaps, dear brother, you are even still afraid to die? If so it is because you either do not know the good God, or you treat Him as a stranger. Ah! cried out the psalmist — weary of the temptations of life, and driven to extremities by the persecutions of the world — how could I support such an existence were I not sure that I shall see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living: « *Credo videre bona Domini in terra viventium.* » Expect the Lord, then O my soul, do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the lord: « *Expecta Dominum,*

¹ *Quis mihi tribuat ut scribantur sermones mei... stylo ferreo et plumbi lamina vel celte sculpantur in silice? Scio enim quod redemptor meus vivit, et in novissimo die de terra surrecturus sum. Et sursum circumdabor pelle mea et in carne mea videbo Deum meum. Quem visurus sum ego ipse, et oculi mei conspecturi sunt, et non alius; reposita est haec spes mea in sinu meo. — Job XIX. 23-27* (According to the Vulgate, as in Office of the Dead).

*viriliter age : et confortetur cor tuum, et sustine Dominum. »*¹

« O God, who makest the minds of the faithful to be of one will ; grant unto thy people to love what thou commandest, and to desire what thou hast promised ; that amidst the varying changes of the world our hearts may there be fixed where true joys abide »².

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

¹ Ps. XXVI, 13, 14.

² *Deus, qui fidelium mentes unius efficis voluntatis : da populis tuis id amare quod praecipis, id desiderare quod promittis ; ut inter mundanas varietates ibi nostra fixa sint corda, ubi vera sunt gaudia.* Oratio Dom. IV. post Pascha.

FIFTH DISCOURSE.

SPIRITUAL FAILINGS IN THE PRIEST.

- I. — Sin in the soul of the Priest.
 - II. — Occasions of sin and how to deal with them.
-

FIFTH DISCOURSE.

SPIRITUAL FAILINGS IN THE PRIEST.

*Quomodo miseretur pater
filiorum, misertus est Domi-
nus timentibus se, quoniam
ipse cognovit figmentum nos-
trum ; recordatus est quo-
niam pulvis sumus.*

« As a father has compas-
sion on his children, so
hath the Lord compassion
on them that fear him : for
he knoweth our frame. He
remembereth that we are
dust. Ps. CII. 13, 14.

He who has an untroubled conscience need not fear death. We are like children placed by our parents in a school. When his school-days are over the youth joyfully returns to the bosom of his family, to his home. Our home is in Heaven. Our Father awaits us there ; He is already calling us to join Him.

Or, perhaps, a better comparison is that of the nine months the child rests in its mother's womb. In this stage of its existence its organs are being slowly formed and nature is preparing it to bear the light of day ; in like manner, during this present life our faculties and acts are being developed and strengthened supernaturally by the grace bestowed on us in Baptism : till the great day comes when we are ripe for Heaven. Then the material envelope is shed ; and the soul, sanctified by habits of virtue, is born into the life of glory.

On the evidence of mere sense, death is seen as an *end* of things : the Liturgy of the Church, enlightened from heaven, sees in it a *beginning*. She calls it a birth : for her the death of a saint is an event to be joyfully commemorated from year to year as an anniversary of his BIRTH into the only true life :

« O God, who year by year dost gladden us with the solemnity of Thy blessed (martyr or confessor, N.) mercifully grant that we who celebrate his heavenly BIRTHDAY, may likewise rejoice in his protection » ¹.

Beyond doubt, the breaking up of our nature,

¹ *Deus qui nos sancti tui annua solemnitate laetificas, concede propitius, ut cujus NATALITIA colimus, ejusdem protectione gaudeamus.*

the separation of soul and body, fills us with an instinctive dread ; for such dissolution is in fact abnormal : were it not for the stain of original sin in which we are born, death would not exist. But our faith should conquer that instinctive fear. If a hand be unexpectedly laid on your shoulder when you are absorbed in thought you start, but no sooner have you recognized in it the hand of a friend than you are again at ease. The Christian, the priest, who sees in death the harbinger of deliverance, no longer dreads it. He familiarizes himself with the thought that this life is but a waiting time : he knows that his real interests are elsewhere ; and his heart turns ever to where his treasure lies. For him God is everything ; and when death beckons him he knows he is losing nothing, parting from nothing, but rather that he is for the first time entering into possession of peace, and light, and eternal life.

One of the most salutary emotions I ever experienced occurred to me in the Catacombs of Rome, when I read the inscriptions on the marble slabs of the *loculi* where the early Christians had laid their dead : *Vivas in pace ! In pace ! Spiritus in pace ! Spiritus tuus in pace !* « Live in peace ! » « Be in peace ! » « May thy spirit rest in peace ! » and when I raised my eyes to the vaults of the sepulchral chambers in the Cata-

combs of St. Calixtus and saw the doves with their olive branches soaring around the Good Shepherd, symbols of the souls that, freed from the fetters of their earthly bodies, had taken flight to their home of peace. The uncertain and the incomprehensible have passed, together with all infirmity, and pain, and mourning ; there remains the eternal repose of these souls in the light that knows no waning : *Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis.*

But there is one condition for the entrance of the soul into its home of peace : at the moment of death it must possess charity, and the sanctifying grace which is the principle of charity. The loss of grace and charity is the work of sin ; and since this privation of grace incapacitates the soul for its highest functions — knowing God as He is and loving Him for His own sake — the state of such a soul is a veritable state of death, and the sin which brings it into this state is called mortal, or deadly sin. My dear brothers, if the examination of conscience on which you have been engaged assures you that you are fit to appear without grave misgiving before the tribunal of God, you have reason to rejoice : in that case it only remains for you to aim at improvement, to seek the perfection on which we shall meditate to-morrow and after. But if, perchance, your conscience be not at ease, if the

remembrance of unconfessed or unforgiven sins be troubling you, take courage now, I earnestly beseech you ; and remove that sole obstacle to your eternal salvation : prepare for a good confession.

This evening we will speak to you of sin, the malice of which must strike the soul of the priest more forcibly than any one else. Then **we** shall examine the occasions which lead the soul of the priest into sin, and the means by which he can and must avoid those occasions.

I.

SIN IN THE SOUL OF A PRIEST.

Sin is *the* evil. There is no other evil. In ordinary language we describe as « evils » or « misfortunes », physical sufferings, temporal losses, temptations. In reality, however, we may turn these things to our benefit ; nay more, according to the very authoritative teaching of St. Augustine, the great opponent and conqueror of Manichean errors, there is on the whole more good in a world where Providence displays the divine art of drawing good out of evil than there would be in the exclusive sovereignty of the good alone. « For He deemed it better to work good from evil than to decree that there be no

evil. » ¹ Indeed it may be laid down as a general rule that the greatest saints have been those who suffered most. In the school of suffering they have learnt to detach themselves more completely from created things and to cling with greater energy to Him who is the true Good, the Absolute Good, who is Goodness, pure and simple.

Now sin is, by definition, the act of a will attaching itself deliberately and completely to what is only a defective good, instead of attaching itself to Him who alone is the Highest and Only Good, the Good *par excellence*. « Hence this failure of the will is evil », says St. Augustine « inasmuch as it violates the right order of things by falling from what is most noble to what is less ². We may turn to good, then, whatever is not sin ; hence everything except sin, is, or may become, a source of good to us. Does not St. Paul tell us that » to them that love God, all things work together unto good ³? There is nothing that may

¹ *Melius enim iudicavit de malis bene facere, quam mala nulla esse permittere.* — Enchiridion, C. XXVII.

² « *Ideo deficitur male quia, contra ordinem naturarum, ab eo quod summe est ad id quod minus est (deficit mala voluntas)* » : St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XII. 8. Previously (4-8) he had said : « *Cum enim Deus summa essentia sit, hoc est, summe sit et ideo immutabilis sit ; rebus quas ex nihilo creavit, esse dedit, sed non summe esse, sicut ipse est* ».

³ *Diligentibus Deum, omnia cooperantur in bonum.* — Rom. VIII. 28.

not serve as a means of salvation if only we love God. But sin, on the contrary, is essentially an evil. It is *the* evil ; there is no other. The will to commit sin is the will — futile, though it be — to subvert God's essential ordering of things. Of necessity, that which is relative to something else, that which is a means to an end, is subordinate to that which is the absolute Good in itself, that which is an end without reference to aught else, that which is in and of itself, *the* End. Now the sinner rebels against this essential subordination of the creature to the Creator, to Him who is the term of the creature's aspirations and the Principle of his existence. He is therefore essentially a rebel. Just as in the biological kingdom an abnormal product of nature is called a monster, so is sin a monstrosity, and all the more deserving of this name inasmuch as the disorder it involves is deeper, attacking as it does the very foundations of the universal order of creation.

Nero, we are told, expressed the mad wish that the human race had but a single head, that he might lop it off at a blow. Or, as Monseigneur Gay somewhere suggests, imagine a wretched madman seized by a mania to extinguish the sun and plunge the whole universe into the icy darkness of death. Just such a mad monster is the sinner : he would that God were not God ;

he would fain drag down the supreme Good from its sovereignty to the low level of the miserable contingent realities that are born but to change, to fade away, and lapse once more into nothingness. « Perverse love » repeats the Doctor of Hippo, « whereby the will abandons the immutable for the perishable good » !¹.

In sober fact, sin is *a madness*. When you sin you try to injure God : you injure only yourself. You can have the will to resist His ordinance, but your will cannot avail. He is immutable ; His being is proof against your blows. It is for you, yourself, who resist God, that sin is an evil. « They are called enemies of God who oppose His rule : availing not to injure Him but themselves. »

They are enemies through their will to resist, not through their power to hurt. For God is immutable and in all respects incorruptible. And hence the vice by which they resist God is not an evil to God but to themselves². « When the earth » « says Bossuet, » sends clouds against the

¹ *Amore perverso quo voluntas ab incommutabili bono ad commutabile bonum deficit.* — Op. cit. XII, 8).

² *Dicuntur inimici Dei qui ejus adversantur imperio : nihil ei valentes nocere, sed sibi. Inimici enim sunt resistendi voluntate, non potestate laedendi. Deus namque immutabilis est, et omni modo incorruptibilis. Idcirco vitium quo resistunt Deo, qui ejus appellantur inimici, non est Deo, sed ipsis malum* — « ibid » 3.

sun that gives it light, it in no way lessens the brilliancy of that light ; it merely covers itself with darkness ; and so the rash sinner, in resisting God, uses his strength but against himself and can ruin only himself by his senseless daring ; he crushes himself in his foolish struggle against God. « Let their sword enter into their own hearts, » says the royal Prophet. « and let their bow be broken » ¹.

« Yes, sin, which disturbs the whole order of the universe, begins by sowing disorder in him who commits it. Revenge, which issues from the heart on its errand of destruction, strikes its first mortal blow at the very heart that fosters it. Injustice, which would profit by what belongs to others, first despoils its own author of his most precious good, his moral rectitude : even before it can touch his neighbour. The slanderer, who filches from others their good name, first tears virtue from his own heart. The impurity which spreads corruption abroad begins by corrupting its own source : for no one can strike at the chastity of another without having first destroyed his own. Thus the sinner is ever his own enemy ; marring within his own conscience that greatest treasure of a rational nature, which is its innocence. So too it follows that sin, not in

¹ *Gladius eorum intret in corda ipsorum, et arcus eorum confringatur : Ps. XXXVI. 15.*

its consequences, but in itself, is the greatest and most terrible of all evils : incomparably greater than all evils from without, because it is the utter undoing and the complete ruin of the soul itself within ; greater too and more terrible far than even the most loathesome diseases of the body, because it is a deadly poison to the life of the soul ; greater beyond measure than any calamity that can befall the mind, for it is a plague that corrupts the conscience ; greater even than the loss of reason, for to lose reason itself is surely less than to destroy deliberately that right use of reason, without which reason itself is but a criminal lunacy ; in a word, sin is the evil above all evils, and the misfortune of all misfortunes, for it is the misfortune of a crime, an infinite loss combined with inexcusable wrong, a total perversion of our nature by the object of our own free choice : an evil that involves at once both the shipwreck and the shame of human liberty »¹.

Finally, sin, by which we try to escape from God's supreme dominion and madly injure ourselves, is also an act of shameless *ingratitude*. Alas, my dear brothers, do we reflect on this ? At the very moment that we raise against God our thought and our will, when the heart and the imagination take their wicked delight in the gratification of sensuality, or pride, or hatred,

¹ Bossuet, *Œuvres Oratoires* (Lebarq, IV. pp. 603, 606).

when by word or act we wound an innocent soul, God, our good God, is preserving within us the very breath of life, the vigour of our organs, the energy of our higher faculties. For, « what hast thou that thou hast not received » ¹. You are hanging by the thread of His sustaining Providence over the abyss into which your sin should hurl you; and it is against the paternal hand which at that very moment still spares you that you utter your impious maledictions, or pour out your unjust, or revengful, or proud, or impure insults and outrages ! I doubt if there be among men any reproach that wounds more grievously than the reproach of ingratitude. We are ashamed to be found guilty of forgetting benefits received. It would seem as if with our Supreme Benefactor alone it were allowable to ignore both His generosity and our obligations.

Reflect, then, as Christians, as priests, and as pastors, how much deeper the malice of sin must be when he who commits it has been brought up in the school of the Gospel, has basked in the light, and rested in the maternal bosom, of the Catholic Church. And reflect again, priests of the Lord and pastors of His flock, reflect how monstrous *your* sins become, since they not only deprive yourselves of the friendship

¹ *Quid autem habes quod non accepisti ?* I. Cor. IV. 7.

of God and endanger your own salvation, but also expose to eternal ruin the souls placed by Providence under your care, the souls that constitute your flock, and for whom you made yourselves responsible when you sought from the Church the dignity of the priesthood and accepted at her hands the jurisdiction you exercise ! On whom then will the curse of the Divine Master fall more pitilessly than on the priest who has betrayed his trust ? « He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea » ¹. « The hell of the sinner who damns himself alone », says St. Gregory, « would seem bearable in comparison with what the Divine Justice must have reserved for the priest who has been a cause of ruin to his flock » ². In one of the visions of St. Catherine of Sienna, our Blessed Lord, speaking of fallen priests, said to her : « Wretched men ! they were called to be Angels on earth, but pride, avarice, impurity have made them demons ! How is it that the ground does not open and swallow them up ?

¹ Matt. XVIII. 6.

² *Si solus caderet, utcumque hunc tolerabilior inferni poena cruciaret.* — S. Gregori Magni, *De cura pastoralis*, L. 2.

What but my infinite Mercy stays the arm of my Justice and restrains Me from striking them down where they stand, leaving them as lifeless statues before the very eyes of the people whom they are leading to destruction » ¹ ?

II

OCCASIONS OF SIN AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM.

My dear brothers, those warnings are serious ; it would be hard indeed to exaggerate their gravity ; but my main desire in this discourse was not so much to dwell on the malice of sin as to plead your cause before the throne of God's mercy. I remember how frequently you throw yourselves upon your knees before the Sovereign Judge, and address to Him this prayer on behalf of your deceased parishioners : « O God whose property is always to have mercy and to spare, we humbly beseech Thee for the soul of Thy servant whom Thou hast this day commanded to depart out of this world, that Thou.... forget it not unto the end.... that as it trusted and believed in Thee, it may not suffer the pains of hell but attain to everlasting happiness ; through Christ our Lord. » ²

¹ *Dialogo*, cap. CXXVII.

² *Deus cui proprium est misereri semper et parcere, te sup-*

And it seemed to me that I too might take my place between the porch and the altar, and that there, prostrate before God and shedding secret tears over hidden and bitter sorrows, I might likewise cry out to Him : « Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people : give not Thy inheritance to reproach, that the heathens should rule over them. Why should they say among the nations : Where is their God ? » ¹

There are none among you whose hearts are hardened. There may be some who have sinned by weakness ; if so, are they not more deserving of pity than of reprobation ? There may be infirm souls that need to be strengthened and protected ; irresolute wills that require a mainstay ; hearts in whose smouldering ashes a new ardour needs to be kindled. All defects in the soul of a priest are indeed sincerely to be deplored ; still, it must be remembered that the

plices exoramus pro anima famuli tui quam hodie de hoc saeculo migrare jussisti.... ne eam obliviscaris in finem.... quia in te speravit et credidit, non poenas inferni sustineat, sed gaudia aeterna possideat : per Christum Dominum nostrum. — Off. Def.

¹ *Inter vestibulum et altare plorabunt sacerdotes, ministri Domini et dicent : Parce, Domine, parce populo tuo ; et ne des haereditatem tuam in opprobrium. ut dominantur eis nationes ! Quare dicunt in populis : Ubi est Deus ? » Joel. II. 17.*

priest himself is a child of Adam, and therefore not immune from those tendencies to evil which, as St. John tells us, drag the whole human race downwards : « The whole world is seated in wickedness ; » ¹ He receives more grace than the layman, it is true, but is he not at the same time vowed to a higher life, to a discipline incomparably more austere ? The layman may legitimately engross himself with secular affairs, reciprocate human affection, dispose freely of his time, and order his own manner of living. The priest, on the contrary, is bound to a life of disinterested self-sacrifice ; he bears about his loins the girdle of chastity and on his arm the maniple of suffering ; he has submitted his will to that of his bishop and has taken the vow of obedience to him.

The pious faithful, who see us only through clouds of incense, clothed with the sacred vestments, in all the solemnity of religious ceremonial, sometimes look upon us in much the same light as the superstitious pagans of Lycaonia regarded St. Paul, when, having seen him work a miracle, they would fain raise him and his companion Barnabas to the altars and offer victims to them. « The gods, » they cried, « are come down to us

¹ *Et mundus totus in maligno positus est.* — I. John. V.
19.

in the likeness of men. ¹ But Paul and Barnabas, shocked at such sacrilege, rent their garments and « leaped out among the people crying, and saying : Ye men, why do ye these things ? We also are mortals, men like unto you, preaching to you to be converted from these vain things, to the living God. » ² Yes, my dear brothers, we all know it only too well. We know it by the struggles we have to endure to let grace, which happily never fails us, triumph in our souls. Yes, we have the same passions as our fellow-mortals ; and sanctity of soul, with us as with them, can be won only by sustained effort and as a reward of valiant co-operation with grace.

And oh ! what perils beset us along the path of our ministry ! How often the laity are, in their own families, with the best intentions our greatest stumbling-blocks. As Cardinal Manning observes ³. « People are very hospitable, and pity a priest's loneliness, and like to have him at their tables. Sometimes the best of people are the least circumspect and most kindly importunate in their

¹ Acts, XIV. 10.

² *Viri, quid hæc facitis ? Et nos mortales sumus, similes vobis homines, και ἡμεῖς ὁμοιοπαθεῖς ἐσμεν ὑμῖν ἄνθρωποι, annuntiantes vobis ad his vanis converti ad Deum vivum.* *ibid.* 13, 14.

³ « Eternal Priesthood ».

invitations. How shall a young and inexperienced mind hold out against these facilities and allurements to relaxation, unpunctuality, self-indulgence, and dissipation ? Thus, little by little, he grows accustomed to what is a life of greater ease and affluence than he ever knew in his own home ; and often he loses in this worldly atmosphere of well-being and comfort, perhaps even of tenderness, the virility of character and holy independence which are indispensable to the progress of the priest's soul in piety and charity. Very innocently the world may ensnare you : it invites you to share in its festivities, protesting that these will be kept — nay that your very presence will keep them — within the bounds of the strictest propriety. You yield to its pressing solicitations : then it wonders to see you resemble itself so closely and is secretly scandalized to find that in the many ordinary acts of your daily life you do not show forth in any striking manner yourself the high ideal you profess to hold up to it for its imitation.

Then again, out of doors, in the bustle of the streets, amid the seductive artifices of fashion, the indecencies of many advertisements, the sensuous suggestions of some public monuments, the freedom and unrestraint of public morals, — what serious assaults are being constantly made upon your modesty ! What undesirable impressions

force their way, in spite of you, through your senses, and obsess your imaginations !

Even the very functions of your sacred ministry strew dangers in your path : your schools and sodalities, your clubs and societies for the working classes, your visits to the sick, your work in the confessional, are continually placing you in circumstances that demand the greatest prudence to safeguard the purity of your consciences and the integrity of your virtue. St. Paul would have you sympathize with your flock and share in their joys and sorrows ; but sympathy awakens gratitude ; gratitude evokes warmth of feeling and expression, wherein it is not always easy for the priest to preserve a proper spirit of detachment and indifference.

The priest's life, my dear friends, is full of dangers ; and I have always noticed that the harsher the judgments of self-indulgent worldlings for the priest who may have momentarily forgotten his obligations, the more compassionate and merciful are the judgments of the saints. For my own part, I do not think I could ever have the melancholy courage to deal harshly with an erring brother acknowledging his fault. When the sinner has washed away his sin in tears of repentance charity no longer considers the malice of the sin, but only the humiliation and the sorrow of him who committed it. The spirit of christianity inclines

us to gentleness and humility, and he who has to do with the culprit need only look into his own heart to behold there the temptation that constantly threatens himself: « Brethren, and if a man be overtaken in any fault, you, who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness ; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted » ¹.

How then, my dear brothers, is a priest to regard the state of his soul, if he has had the misfortune to offend his God? How is he to judge himself?

On the one hand the weakness of human nature, which belongs to us as to the most abject of our brothers, and the dangers to which we are constantly exposed by our mission among men, are such that, *naturally* speaking, not one of us is capable of remaining for a long time the chaste, detached, submissive, hard-working, self-sacrificing man that the true priest ought to be. Oh ! I can fully understand the distrust and incredulity entertained about the priest's life by those who have not the happiness to possess the Faith. How can they be expected to believe in that of which they have never had the remotest

¹ « *Fratres, et si praeoccupatus fuerit homo in aliquo delicto, vos qui spirituales estis, hujusmodi instruite in spiritu lenitatis ; considerans te ipsum, ne et tu tenteris.* — Gal. VI. I.

experience? In their own lives passion conquers at its first assault. They yield without a struggle. The novel and the theatre have taught them to divide their fellow-men into two classes: those who yield without resistance to every impulse of sensual love; and those who either foolishly or cleverly simulate virtue.

But, on the other hand, that which is not possible to nature alone is being actually and constantly achieved, day after day, through the whole course of their lifetime, under the influence of divine grace, in the hearts of christians who pray and struggle and mortify themselves for the honour and service of God. Just this very day I have been talking to a young man of twenty-five, who has come back to the practice of religion, which he had abandoned from the time of his first communion. In daily contact with persons whose irreproachable lives contrasted strongly with his own, he began to suspect that the Catholic religion possessed a power, a hidden virtue, to the absence of which his own weakness must have been due. — For a long time previously he had been persuaded that the control of the ordinary human passions was an impossibility, that all pretension to virtue was simply hypocrisy. Now he has begun to pray, to invoke our Blessed Lady, to frequent the Sacraments; and he tastes with glad surprise the freedom of a

soul that has unexpectedly recovered its lost dominion over itself.

« God does not command what is impossible », says the Council of Trent, in words borrowed from Saint Augustine, « but when He lays His command upon you He warns you to do all in your power, and to appeal to Him for what is beyond your power ; and He will then help you to do what of yourself you had not the power to do ¹.

Now, my dear brothers, can you lay your hands on your hearts and assure me that you do all that in you lies to safeguard your virtue ? In other words : are you men of mortification and men of prayer?...

Do you mortify yourselves sufficiently ? Or do you hold mortification to be a superfluous virtue, a somewhat irksome virtue, worthy indeed of your admiration, but rather to be left in the cloister than to be carried into your daily lives ? And yet was it not to all of us that our Saviour addressed this teaching : « the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away », and again : Enter ye in at the narrow gate : for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who

¹ *Deus impossibilia non jubet, sed jubendo monet et facere quod possis et petere quod non possis et ipse adjuvabit ut possis.*

go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life : and few there are that find it ¹. » It is not enough to abstain from gratifying our sensual nature ; we must treat it as an enemy and pursue it with a holy hatred even to its last entrenchments. « He that loveth his life shall lose it : and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal ². » Argument is needless here, my dear brothers, there are no two ways of being disciples of our crucified Master : there is only one, and that one is to follow, with the cross on our shoulders, the path He has trod before us and where we shall find at every step the drops of His sweat and His blood : « Whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple ³.

Yes, cloistered religious mortify themselves ; and they do well ; but is not mortification even more necessary for us than for them ? When at

¹ *Regnum coelorum vim patitur et violenti rapiunt illud. Matt. XI, 12. Lata porta et spatiosa via est, quae ducit ad perditionem et multi sunt qui intrant per eam. Quam angusta porta, et arcta via est quae ducit ad vitam, et pauci sunt qui inveniunt eam. Matt. VII, 13, 14).*

² *Qui amat animam suam, perdet eam ; si quis odit animam suam in hoc mundo, in vitam aeternam custodit eam. John, XII, 25.*

³ *Qui non bajulat crucem suam et venit post me non potest meus esse discipulus. Luke, XIV, 27.*

the close of the year the Bishop's Counsellors meet to deliberate with us on the admission of candidates to holy Orders, we have sometimes to say to a candidate : « Dear friend, you have noble aspirations in which we are inclined to see a call to the priesthood ; but you have too sensitive a heart and too feeble a will to face the inevitable dangers you would have to encounter in the world ; embrace the religious life where you will be protected from perilous occasions and where a stricter discipline will support your weakness. » Do you not agree with us that this is good advice ? And do you not also conclude that the more the virtue of a priest is by force of circumstances exposed to danger, the more he needs to safeguard it by supernatural means ? The watchword of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Vince teipsum* — « Conquer thyself, » by which so many souls in religion have been tempered like steel, ought to be also the device of our pastoral mission. St. Paul was no monk, but rather the model of own apostolate among the people ; yet he mortified himself and warns us to do likewise : « I chastise my body and bring it into subjection ¹. » « See therefore, brethren, now you walk circumspectly : not as unwise, but as

¹ *Castigo corpus meum et in servitutem redigo.* — I Cor. IX, 27.

wise :.. because the days are evil.... And be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury, but be ye filled with the Holy Spirit ¹ ». Consider the lives of the saints : not one will you find but had to battle fiercely with his passions, not one whose purity was preserved but at the cost of heroic, continuous and unsparing struggles. » Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting ². »

We have already reminded you of the noted passage in which the Fathers of the Council of Trent instruct us to do what we can and at the same time appeal to Almighty God for help in what is beyond our unaided resources. God, says St. Augustine, commands us to do what would be impossible to us if left to ourselves, in order that the feeling of our own impotence, the painful consciousness thereof may make us call upon God for help

¹ *Videte, itaque, fratres, caute ambuletis : non quasi insipientes, sed ut sapientes... quoniam dies mali sunt.... Et nolite inebriari vino, in quo est luxuria ; sed implemini Spiritu sancto. — Eph. V, 15, 18).*

² *Nolite errare, Deus non irridetur. Quae enim seminaverit homo, haec et metet ; quoniam qui seminat in carne sua, de carne et metet corruptionem ; qui autem seminat in spiritu, de spiritu metet vitam aeternam. — Gal. VI. 7, 8).*

and pour out our hearts to Him in prayer.

In the second place I appeal to your consciences and ask: Are you men of *Prayer*? The question may seem out of place, I know: do we not say our office every day; do we not celebrate mass every morning? have we not, besides, our private devotions, the Rosary, the Way of the Cross, and other prayers that we are in the habit of saying night and morning? Yes, I know all that; but still I ask: Is it the soul that prays in each and all of these exercises? When after Vespers or Matins we lay down our breviary, can we always hope that we are the nearer to God after these devotions? that the breath of His grace has touched and stirred our hearts? Can we feel that we have worshipped God in spirit and in truth? Or could we be greatly surprised if after a long recitation of prescribed prayers we were to hear the voice of the Master say to us: « Hitherto you have not asked anything » ¹ Therefore throw your whole heart into your prayers: « Ask, and it shall be given to you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you ². » Is it any wonder that at times you have felt yourselves waver, or even have been inclined to fear that

¹ *Usque modo non petistis quidquam* — John, XVI. 24.

² *Petite et dabitur vobis, quaerite et invenietis, pulsate et aperietur vobis.* Matth. VII. 17.

virtue of a high order was beyond your strength? It was you who sought to accomplish the impossible, and not God who required it of you : « *Deus impossibilia non jubet* » : » God never commands what is impracticable, for while you do what lies in your power He expects you to appeal to Him for what is beyond it, and He has given His divine word that He will hear your prayer ¹.

CONCLUSION.

It is time to draw our conclusions from this long discourse and our first conclusion will have regard to our future. However austere you may think the teaching of Christ and His apostles you cannot change it. You were not compelled to accept the perilous honour of the priesthood. St. Jerome, deeming himself unworthy, shrank for a long time from taking holy Orders ; and when at last he yielded to pressing solicitations, he accepted Orders only on the express condition that he would not be bound to exercise the functions of the sacred ministry. But for you the time of deliberation is past ; you have accepted the responsibility and you now bear on your souls the indelible mark of the dignity and obli-

¹ *Deus impossibilia non jubet, sed jubendo monet et facere quod possis et petere quod non possis et adjuvabit ut possis.*

gations of the priesthood. Almighty God could have chosen as His ministers angels or impeccable mortals. He preferred to have His doctrine preached and His sacraments administered by weak men, sinful men, men who need to offer expiatory sacrifices for themselves as well as for their people : « who can have compassion on them that are ignorant and err : because [they themselves] also [are] compassed with infirmity ¹. Hence you must courageously make up your minds to carry on the struggle, not to presume on your own strength but to go forward under the Holy Spirit and resist the solicitations of the flesh ². There is not a saint in heaven who might not have been a criminal but for grace ; there is not a lost soul in hell who might not have become a saint had he made use of the grace given him. « We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency may be of the power of God, and not of us ³, « Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear ; for I am afraid of thy judgments ⁴ ».

¹ *Quoniam et ipse circumdatus est infirmitate et propterea debet, quemadmodum pro populo, ita etiam et pro semetipso offerre pro peccatis.* — Hebr. V. 2. 3.

² *Spiritu ambulate et desideria carnis non perficiatis* Gal. V. 16.

³ *Habemus autem thesaurum istum in vasis fictilibus, ut sublimitas sit virtutis Dei et non ex nobis.* 2. Cor. IV. 1.

⁴ *Confige timore tuo carnes meas, a judiciis enim tuis timui.* Ps. CXVIII. 120.

My dear Brothers, at this stage it may be necessary for some one or other among you to take a strong and abiding resolution. If you are conscious of guilt in your soul free it at once from the thralldom of sin. If you have had the misfortune to offend God weep over your fall, as it is right you should. Call on the Lord, send up to Him your cry of contrition : « Hear, O Lord, my prayer and let my cry come to Thee ». Put on the penitential spirit of the stricken and sorrowing Psalmist : « I am smitten as grass, and my heart is withered : because I forgot to eat my bread... For I did eat ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of thy anger and indignation : for having lifted me up thou hast thrown me down ¹ ». Weep over your misfortune, for in sinning you have been your own enemy and have done yourself a bitter and grievous wrong : « He that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul ² ». If through the hardness of your heart you cannot feel contrition, ask of God to grant you the gift of real sorrow. The Missal contains a prayer in which we expressly implore the Lord to soften our hardened hearts so that with tears of com-

¹ *Percussus sum ut foenum et aruit cor meum... cinerem tamquam panem manducabam, et potum meum cum fletu miscebam a facie irae et indignationis tuae, quia elevans allisisti me.* Ps. CI. I, 5, 10, 11.

² *Qui diligit iniquitatem odit animam suam.* Ps. X. 6.

punction we may truly and efficaciously weep for our sins : « Draw forth from the hardness of our hearts tears of compunction, that we may be able to bewail our sins » ¹. Do not add to your guilt by casting a doubt on the Divine Mercy. « If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow : and if they be as red as crimson, they shall be as white as wool » ² ».

I have just mentioned the liturgical prayer in which the Church invites us to ask for the gift of tears ; there is another in which she declares that God repulses no one and that there is no crime so enormous but that a repentant and humble prayer can obtain its forgiveness. « O God, who rejectest no one, but in Thy tender mercy art propitiated by the repentance of those who have sinned however grievously : receive with favour the prayers we humbly offer Thee..... » ³ »

Remember the fall of Peter, the chief of the Apostles ! Peter, destined by God to become the foundation-stone of the Catholic Church ; Peter, who in a few days' time was to be appointed

¹ *Educ de cordis nostri durtia lacrymas compunctionis, ut peccata nostra plangere valeamus.*

² *Si fuerint peccata vestra ut coccinum, quasi nix dealbabunter ; et si fuerint rubra quasi vermiculus, velut lana alba erunt.* Is. I. 18.

³ « *Deus qui nullum respuit, sed quantumvis peccantibus, per poenitentiam pia miseratione placaris ; respice propitius ad preces humilitatis nostrae....* »

shepherd over the lambs and sheep of the Christian fold ; Peter, who not only had received with the other apostles the teaching of Christ attested by His miracles, but had even been privileged to see the glory of Thabor ; Peter, who at the farewell supper had received the Holy Eucharist, the Order of Priesthood, and the fulness of the sacerdotal dignity ; Peter, who had just been present — though alas ! in sleep — at the dire agony of Jesus ; did not he, even he, ignominiously deny his Master at the word of a mere serving maid and thrice declare that he knew Him not ?... O my God, may we not divine the secret purpose for which Thou didst permit our first Pontiff so to fall ? If Peter, through the bitterness of his tears — « *exiit autem foras et flevit amare* » — obtained forgiveness, who among Thy bishops and priests can still doubt his own power to obtain it ?... Thou hast willed, O my God, Thou who art the infinitely wise and the infinitely holy, that Thy ministers should be by nature so weak and so filled with the sense of their own misery that they might always feel sincere sympathy and pity for erring and misguided souls : « who can have compassion on them that are ignorant and that err : because he himself also is compassed with infirmity » ¹. It is Thy will that the contrast between

¹ *Qui condolere possit iis qui ignorant et errant, quoniam et ipse circumdatus est infirmitate.* — Hebr. V. 2.

the misery of sinful man and the splendour of his priestly ministry should make manifest to all that the efficacy of Thy grace redounds to Thy glory alone. Every priest conscious of his own weakness, and wondering at the marvellous triumphs of Thy power, will re-echo the cry of the three children in the fiery furnace : « Put us not to confusion, but deal with us according to Thy meekness, and according to the multitude of thy mercies, and deliver us according to thy wonderful works, and give glory to thy name, O Lord » ¹. We place in Thee, O Lord Jesus, in Thee alone, our entire trust. We may, like the prodigal son, have left our Father's home in the foolish hope of enjoying a freer life ; we may for a time have wandered far from Thee ; but moved by the misery of our state, and remembering the happy days spent in union with Thee, we arise now, O Jesus, and return to Thee : « *Surgam et ibo ad patrem* ». Thou wilt not turn us away.

No, dear repentant brother, Jesus will not repulse you : no sooner does He perceive the first faint salutary movement of your heart than His arms open wide to welcome and forgive you.

¹ *Ne confundas nos, sed fac nobiscum juxta mansuetudinem tuam, et secundum multitudinem misericordiae tuae. Et erue nos in mirabilibus tuis, et da gloriam nomini tuo, Domine. — Dan. III, 42, 43.*

So great is His joy over the repentant prodigal that it even tempts to the envy brother who had never gone astray. Oh, do not hesitate. One moment's regret, one moment's humiliation, one act of sincere sorrow and you will be relieved of your grievous burden and your heart will overflow with joy. And your confessor, too, will be filled with happiness. Do you not remember having yourself some time or other brought back a sinner to God, and was is not a source of one of the deepest joys your heart ever felt?...

My dear friends, I know not whether there be in this assembly a soul in mortal sin ; but what I do firmly believe is this : that to-morrow, when the confessions are over, there will not be a single soul without the friendship of God. Then, when your souls are purified, you must all remember carefully what occasioned your falls ; and in order to make sure of the future you must be faithful to the two great means of preserving your sacerdotal sanctity : mortification and prayer : « Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak » ¹.

¹ *Vigilate et orate ut non intretis in tentationem. Spiritus quidem promptus est, caro autem infirma. — Matt. XXVI. 41.*

§ 3. ATTACHMENT OF THE SOUL TO GOD.

SIXTH DISCOURSE.

Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

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SIXTH DISCOURSE.

Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life.

- I. — The Movement of the Soul towards God.
II. — Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Ego sum via, et veritas, et vita.

« I am the way, and the truth, and the life. » —
John, XIV, 6.

My dear brothers, from the first day of the Retreat we have been exhorting you to penance ; for in the wise and weighty words of St. Francis of Sales, it is essential that by our spiritual exercises we should undertake a complete re-ordering of our lives and make a strong and earnest resolution to live entirely for God¹. Only yesterday we turned to those among you who might still be in sin, and with all the

¹ *Treatise on the Love of God.* XII. 8.

compassionate charity that could be prompted by our zeal for God's glory and our love for your souls, we addressed to you an appeal that finds eloquent expression in those touching words of the Prophet Joel : « The day of the Lord is great and very terrible, and who can stand it ? Now therefore, saith the Lord : Be converted to me with all your heart in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning. And rend your hearts, and not your garments ; and turn to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy, and ready to repent of [to forgive] the evil. » ¹ My dear brothers, if you are not truly happy, if light and energy and an atmosphere of peace be still absent from your souls, do not go far to seek the cause. It is within yourselves. Whether you desire it or not, the Divine Goodness is attracting you as the sun attracts its satellites. You are free, it is true, to withdraw yourselves momentarily from its beneficent rays, to divert your thoughts and escape the consciousness of its attraction ; but Divine

¹ *Magnus dies Domini et terribilis valde ; et quis sustinebit eum ? Nunc ergo dicit Dominus, convertimini ad me in toto corde vestro in jejuniis et in fletu et in planctu. Et scindite corda vestra, et non vestimenta vestra ; et convertimini ad Dominum Deum vestrum, quia benignus et misericors est, pateriens et multae misericordiae et praestabilis super malitia. — Joel, II, 11-13.*

Love is acting on you all the while, it is this Love alone, as Dante tells us in his forcible words, that gives the entire universe its motion ¹ : it is this love then — whether you know it or not — that guides your deepest desires.

Relativity, that which the schools call the « *esse ad* », is a primordial fact in created nature ; in the domain of action it is revealed in an instinctive impulse giving birth to all activity of the creature. Creatures of God, in full possession of free will, do you obey this impulse of your nature ? Do you freely respond to the attraction of Divine Love ? If you do, you will go forward in the light ; each step will draw you nearer to the goal and enable you to scale yet loftier heights ; your life will grow in the order pleasing to God ; and, finally, you will be led to the kingdom of peace. « I am the light of the world : he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life » ². But if, on the contrary, you raise the barrier of your free will against the call of divine Love, your soul will be torn with harrowing conflicts and plunged in disorder and confusion. Oh, how admirably that profound

¹ *L'amor che muove il sole e l'altre stelle.* — Dante, Paradiso, XXXIII.

² *Ego sum lux mundi. Qui sequitur me, non ambulat in tenebris, sed habebit lumen vitae.* — John, VIII. 12.

psychologist of Hippo, the great St. Augustine, analysed the human heart in the tumultuous interplay of its aspirations ! and how sharply these few words of his mark the contrast between the soul that opens itself to the light and warmth of heaven and the soul that rebels against truth and love : « Placed as it is between God and creatures, the human soul by turning to its Creator is enlightened, ennobled and perfected ; by turning to creatures it is blinded, degraded and corrupted » ¹.

During the early days of the Retreat, my dear brothers, you let these thoughts sink into your hearts, and you removed the obstacles that would prevent or impede the elevation of your souls to God. For the remaining days you must give full and free scope to your aspirations : « you must take a strong and earnest resolution to live entirely for God. » The object of this day's Discourse is to help you to this end. We will first apply ourselves to seeking for God ; we shall then find that the soul can effectually go to Him only through Jesus Christ, » *ad Deum, per Jesum Christum*.

My dear brothers, « if you be risen with

¹ *Anima media inter Deum et creaturas posita, conversione ad Deum illuminatur, melioratur et perficitur ; conversione ad creaturas obtenebratur, deterioratur, corrumpitur.*

Christ, seek the things that are above ; where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth ¹. »

Holy Mary, Mother of God, Mother of Jesus Christ, and our Mother, one of the last words of our dying Saviour was to entrust us in the person of St. John to thy maternal charge. Remember, to-day most particularly, that Thou didst condescend to take special care of the souls of us priests. Who ever knew as perfectly as Thou the secrets of the adorable heart of Jesus, or drank so deeply of its sweetness ? Never were the Cherubim around the throne of God illuminated as Thou wert by the light of His grace : while the triumphant news of His Incarnation and the peace-bearing promises of the Infant-God to the world resounded in Thine ears, « Glory to God in the highest : and on earth peace to men of good will ² », Thy soul was wrapped in silent prayer, pondering, learning, meditating, growing in the knowledge and love of Him whose body was formed of Thy flesh, whom Thou didst bear in thy virginal

¹ *Si consurrexistis cum Christo, quae sursum sunt quaerite, ubi Christus est in dextra Dei sedens. Quae sursum sunt sapite, non quae super terram.* — Col. III. 1. 2.

² *Gloria in altissimis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis* ». Luke, II. 1).

womb, whom Thou didst nourish at Thy breast, and who had come into this world to execute the merciful and just designs of His Eternal Father : « Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart ¹ ».

And when the mission of thy Divine Son was accomplished thou wast there beside His cross ; from His dying lips Thou didst receive the authentic declaration that His course was run, « *consummatum est* », that, consequently the mission of His ministers, *our* mission, was about to begin. Humble and trustful we kneel at Thy feet, O holy Mother. Teach us to know, to love and to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ. Thy maternal authority gives to Thy prayers for us an unparalleled efficacy with the Creator and Lord of all things, Who is Thy Son and the fruit of Thy virginal womb ; take into Thy holy hands the guidance of our clergy ; stand by the helm of our bark and guide us into port ². Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, pray for us.

¹ *Maria autem conservabat omnia verba haec, conferens in corde suo.* — Luke, II. 19.

² *Acceptissimis tuis ac materna auctoritate validis precibus ad Dominum ac Deum omnium Conditozem Filium tuum ex te sine patre genitum, ecclesiastici ordinis gubernacula fac dirigas, et ad portum tranquillum perducas.* — S. Germani, In Presentatione Deiparae. Cfr. Officium Immaculae Conceptionis B. V. M., in tertio Nocturno.

I.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE SOUL TOWARDS GOD.

You recall, my dear brothers, some metaphysical ideas that issued naturally from the considerations we put before you in our earlier discourses on the everchanging character of all created things and the consequent right ordering of our lives. Events pass ; worlds change ; history is made of monuments that perish, of glories that dazzle and fade away, of civilisations that spring up and flourish, only once again to disappear for ever.

That which changes cannot possess within itself the adequate reason of its change. Now the universe changes. Therefore the universe has not in itself the adequate reason for its changing existence.

It follows then that there exists, outside this everchanging world, a Being who is not Himself subject to change, and who can thus account for the origin of all the changes of the universe. This Being metaphysicians call a *Pure Act* ; by which they mean that His reality is exempt from all potentiality, from all capacity of receiving further actuation, and is therefore immutable, eternal, all-perfect. Such is the first notion through which philosophical thought conceives

the supreme Being. The principle on which this argument is based has all the cogent evidence of an axiom ; « That which changes has not within itself the adequate reason of its change » ; or, to express it in other words with the same meaning : « All change is dependent on some being other than that which changes ; *Quidquid movetur ab alio movetur.* »

It is easy to understand that a being should possess in itself the determining ground or reason of what it is ; and consequently that it can offer to our intelligence the explaining reason of its reality, of its actual state. But that a being should possess in itself the full determining ground of some reality other than itself, of a reality or of states differing entirely from its reality, or its states, that is unintelligible. The first proposition is only a development of the principle of identity : « That which is, is. » The second would be an affirmation of the identity of contradictories, the negation of the principle of contradiction.

Represent to yourselves a being who is successively in two states *A* and *B*, the which states are really distinct from one another. Since by hypothesis the state *B* contains a reality other than *A*, it is evident that the state *A* alone cannot explain the state *B*. Therefore the being who was initially in a state *A* cannot, of itself alone, fully explain the second state *B*. Therefore

the passage from the state *A* to the state *B* — the change — must depend on something other than the being which was in the state *A*.

The principle on which we have based our argument, and on which rests the theology of Aristotle, of St. Thomas Aquinas, and of all the great thinkers of the School, has therefore the character of an axiom : *That which changes has not in itself the adequate reason of its change, and therefore does not itself account fully for that change.*

Whence the following conclusion emerges : Beyond and above all beings subject to change we must affirm, under pain of contradicting ourselves, the existence of a Being whose nature is exempt from the change to which all the things of our experience are subject. This Supreme Being, this Pure Actuality, we call God. So that when, in the language of the old masters of Scholastic Philosophy, we speak of change, modification, differentiation, alteration, transformation, under the generic title of « *movement* », we can deduce from « the movement of the universe » the existence of a « *Primum Movens Immobile* » an Immovable Prime Mover ».

Passing next from the study of the vicissitudes of the external world and of our own physical activity, to the consideration of our interior life, we detect there an aspiration, constant and imperious, towards an absolute moral good, a

good which once more forces upon us, under a new aspect, the great truth of the existence of God. From the dawn of reason, that is, from the time man becomes conscious of his personal responsibility, he feels himself bound to subordinate his will and his desires to an end which is higher and nobler than the self-interest of the passing moment. He has obligations towards his neighbour, towards his family, towards his country, towards society. But society itself exists, as an organised whole, only to safeguard more effectually the mutual interests of all its members ; from which it results that man, conscious of his moral obligations, must search necessarily and instinctively, high above the social entity which envelops him and of which he is himself a factor, for an absolute, ultimate Good, a selfsubsisting End, — in a word, for God, the keystone of the moral edifice.

How comes it then that humanity thus gravitates around a fixed centre, without finding in itself the end and the *raison d'être* of the movement that carries it along ? What then is this human nature ? Man has had a beginning in time, each individual is born on a certain day into the world, then grows and develops, and finally dissappears. Man is a « contingent being » as the philosophers say : which means that he possesses existence indeed, but that of himself he

cannot conserve it, nor, consequently, have originated it. We must then look elsewhere, beyond him, for the explanation of this contingent existence of his. Were we to seek such a reason in beings anterior to himself, but contingent like himself, we should merely be shifting the difficulty backward instead of solving it. We are forced therefore to conclude that above and beyond the beings whose existence is contingent there is a first Being whose existence is in no wise contingent ; in other words, a Being whose very essence is existence, whom metaphysicians call the Self-subsisting Being — the *Ens a se*, — the Necessary Being. » Thus the affirmation of the existence of a Necessary Being, First Principle of all contingent existences, appears once more as the only way to escape self-contradiction.

Explore, ye metaphysicians, the attributes of this transcendent Being, First Principle and Last End of all that our external experience discovers to us, of all that our inner consciousness makes known to us. By means of your most searching analyses, deduce from your primal concept of a Necessary Being, all-sufficient in its transcendent Entity, the infinity of God, His immutability, His immensity, His eternity. Try to explain His relations with His world, which He upholds and directs by His Providence. Seek to formulate the

physical and moral laws of the universe ; and hold up to our admiration the wonderful convergence of all creation towards that Term which even the reason of the child on its first awakening dimly feels, toward that Final Goal which humanity, civilized and uncivilized, has always and everywhere implicitly yearned after and worshipped. Yes ! throw yourselves heart and soul into this noble and arduous labour : there is not a well disposed, virtuous or sincere soul that will not applaud your efforts, and hail you as benefactors and messengers of enlightenment and peace to mankind.

And yet.... And yet.... The deepest and highest speculations of metaphysics are after all so like the lisping language of the infant : They are so devoid of life and warmth ! They have so little to stimulate the soul that is thirsting for love ! They leave such a desert waste between us and God ! When the Christian, flooded with the warm and beneficent light of faith, hears on the one hand the clear voice of Reason discoursing on God, and feels on the other the yearnings and groanings that are perpetually ascending from the suffering heart of humanity, is he not almost tempted to cry out to all poor souls that are thus wandering in the shadow of death, yet hungering and thirsting for God, as Lazarus cried out to Dives : « Between us and you there

is fixed a great chaos ¹ » ? You know how St. Paul reminded the pagans of Ephesus, newly converted to Christianity, of the sadness of their former condition : « Be mindful that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the conversation of Israel, and strangers to the testament, having no hope of the promise and without God in this world. » — *atheists — hopeless — without God in this world* ² ».

Is not this wholesale aberration of the pagan nations the explanation of all idolatry ? Surely it is : Men crave naturally for a God living in the midst of them ; then, failing to grasp the idea that one and the same being can be transcendent in His own proper nature and yet at the same time present to His creatures, they attribute to Him mere human proportions, represent Him by means of fetishes and idols, confound Him blindly with the various actions of their daily lives, assign Him a place at their firesides, or even associate Him with the very ashes of their departed ancestors in the tomb.

¹ *Inter nos et vos chaos magnum firmatum est.* Luke, XVI. 26.

² *Propter quod memores estote, quod aliquando vos gentes in carne.... quia eratis in illo tempore sine Christo, alienati, a conversatione Israel, et hospites testamentorum promissionis, spem non habentes et sine Deo in hoc mundo, ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες καὶ ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.* — Eph. II. 11, 12.

And those who, on the other hand, are repelled by this coarser idolatry of the masses, those who prefer to keep in touch with immaterial realities, those have ever and always exhibited the tendency to identify their own personality with that of the Divine Being: they also, though in a different way, reach the same result, the denial of the true God.

Thus the idolatry of the heathen, and the pantheism of the philosopher, whether in ancient or in modern times, bear abiding and eloquent testimony to two great truths: the thirst of the human heart to be in relation with God, and the moral impossibility of discovering for itself, without aid from above, what God really is, and what He must be for man. On the testimony of St. Paul we know that their ignorance of the true God was for pagan nations the source of their moral corruption. Who that has heard them can ever forget these stinging words of the Epistle to the Romans? « The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and injustice of those men that detain the truth of God in injustice; because that which is known of God is manifest in them. For God hath manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: his eternal power also and divinity so that they are inexcus-

able. Because that, when they knew God, they have not glorified him as God, or given thanks : but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. For professing themselves to be wise they became fools. And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts and of creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness, to dishonour their own bodies among themselves : who changed the truth of God into a lie : and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen ¹ ».

¹ *Revelatur enim ira Dei de coelo super omnem impietatem, et injustitiam hominum eorum, qui veritatem Dei in injustitia detinent : Quia quod notum est Dei, manifestum est in illis. Deus enim illis manifestavit. Invisibilia enim ipsius, a creatura mundi, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta, conspiciuntur ; sempiterna quoque ejus virtus, et divinitas : ita ut sint inexcusabiles. Quia cum cognovissent Deum, non sicut Deum glorificaverunt, aut gratias egerunt : sed evanuerunt in cogitationibus suis, et obscuratum est insipiens cor eorum : Dicentes enim se esse sapientes stulti facti sunt. Et mutaverunt gloriam incorruptibilis Dei in similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis, et volucrum, et quadrupedum, et serpentium. Propter quod tradidit illos Deus in disideria cordis eorum, in immunditiam ; ut contumeliis afficiant corpora sua in semetipsis : Qui commutaverunt veritatem Dei in mendacium : et coluerunt, et servierunt creaturae potius quam Creatori, qui est benedictus in saecula. Amen. » Rom. I, 18-25.*

And anyhow, even when human reason, without the aid of faith, remains on the right track, how poor and sorry are its findings in the domain of religious truth ! The God it discovers is so *abstract*, and apparently so *cold*, and so *far distant* from His creatures !

He is so *abstract* : did not the great St. Thomas himself close his laborious enquiries concerning God from the standpoint of reason, with this bitterly sincere avowal : The highest knowledge of God to which we can attain, forces upon us the conviction that we do not and cannot know Him as He is ; it simply makes us realize that we do not comprehend Him.

And He seems so *cold* too, this God of the philosophers : knowing Him to be immaterial, they must, if they would represent Him to themselves without error, eliminate from their notion of Him all that falls under the perception of sense ; in other words, all that is capable of awakening an emotion in the heart. Supreme Being, First Cause, Pure Act, Absolute Good, Necessary Being : such are the concepts that conform to what reason strictly demands ; but then, these are mere bloodless, lifeless skeletons, powerless to awaken in our hearts any thrill of warm feeling.

How *far away* too He seems to be, this « transcendent Being » of the philosophers ! To save their concept of Him from the error of anthro-

pomorphism, they declare Him to be « supereminent » ; they describe Him as « quite different » from all the other beings that are accessible to our experience, whether external or internal ; the properties of created things may be attributed to Him only with a carefully corrective reserve ; that He is *not* of the nature of any known thing, we are well aware ; but of what nature He positively *is*, our reason cannot tell us ; we know that the throne of His Majesty is set in light eternal, while our feeble vision can bear but the shadow that it casts : for « He inhabiteth light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen, nor can see ¹ ».

Is it any wonder then that Athens should have had philosophers — and you may recognize their disciples among the protagonists of agnosticism in our own day — philosophers who, in their despair of finding a God to satisfy at once both the aspirations of their hearts and the judgment of their feeble reason, had ended by offering adoration « to the Unknown God ². » Thanks be to God for ever, my dear brothers, better days have dawned upon the world, and we are among the privileged ones ; for Jesus Christ at the price

¹ *Qui lucem inhabitat inaccessibilem ; quem nullus hominum vidit, sed nec videre potest.* — I. TIM. VI. 16.

² « *Deo ignoto* » Acts XVII, 23.

of His own blood has drawn us near to God and has brought peace to our souls : « But now in Christ Jesus, you, who some time were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace ¹. » Yes, « for the grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men. Instructing us that denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ » ². More fortunate than the Christians of the first generations, we have not passed a single day of our conscious life under the yoke of pagan impiety ; even before we were capable of doing right or wrong, Baptism had purchased us from death and consecrated us to Christ. With Jesus Christ we have risen again to life. These days of recollection, which a merciful Providence has vouchsafed to us, recall to our minds again the work of our conversion and sanctification, and enable us to carry it on

¹ *Nunc autem in Christo Jesu vos, qui aliquando eratis longe, facti estis prope in sanguine Christi. Ipse enim est pax nostra.* Eph. II, 13, 14.

² *Apparuit enim gratia Dei salvatoris nostri omnibus hominibus, erudiens nos, ut abnegantes impietatem et saecularia desideria : sobrie et juste, et pie vivamus in hoc saeculo, expectantes beatam spem et adventum gloriae magni Dei, et salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi.* — Tit. II. 11-13.

more earnestly : — « Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above ; where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead ; and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life ; then you also shall appear with him in glory ¹. »

II. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. ²

Jesus Christ will teach us how to know, to love and to serve God. He, the God-Man, will instruct us by His teachings and win us by His exhortations. Before leaving this world He founded a Church and entrusted to it the perennial mission of preserving, interpreting and applying to the various conditions of all ages the faith He had preached and the moral code He had delivered to man — in part as a matter of duty and in part

¹ *Igitur, si consurrexistis cum Christo, quae sursum sunt quaerite, ubi Christus est in dextra Dei sedens ; quae sursum sunt sapite, non quae super terram. Mortui enim estis, et vita vestra est abscondita cum Christo in Deo. Quum Christus apparuerit, vita vestra, tunc apparebitis cum ipso in gloria. — Col. III, 1-4.*

² Cfr. Bishop Hedley, *Our Divine Saviour*, pp. 303-346 : eloquent and instructive pages the thoughts of which are here in part reproduced.

as a counsel of perfection. Every one of us can find for himself that doctrine of salvation, which Our Lord Jesus Christ brought into this world, outlined already in the prophecies of the Old Law, then expounded in the form of sermons and parables in the Gospels, next finding its application in the Epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. John, St. James and St. Jude, and finally developed in the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. We, whose mission it is to teach the nations, ought above all others to make it our most solemn and sacred duty to read and re-read Holy Scripture and the traditions of the Church.

But we have something better still than the word of the Master ; we have the fertilising light of His example ; we have Christ Himself, who is in His own person the Way and the Truth and the Life : « I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me » ¹ It is as if He would say to us : I will not merely point out to you the path in which you are to walk, and reveal to you the truth in which you are to believe, and provide for you the nourishment of your souls ; I Myself am the Way that will lead you, the substantial

¹ *Ego sum Via, et Veritas et Vita. Nemo venit ad patrem nisi per me.* John, XIV, 6.

truth that will enlighten you, the very source and fountain-head of your spiritual life. *I am the way* : there are no two ways : there is but one, mine alone, the only way that can never fail. *I am the truth*, the wole truth : no flower springs more naturally from its stem, no ear of corn from its seed, than the truth, nay, all the truths both of time and eternity, proceed through Me who am the Word, from the fulness of the Divinity. *I am the life*, the life of your life : — if you drink from any other source than Mine your thirst will not be allayed ; drink from my source and you will thirst no more, and from the depths of your being there will issue a fountain of living water to feed and fertilize in you the germs of life eternal : « Whosoever drinketh of this water, shall thirst again : but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst for ever ; but the water that I will give him, shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting. » ¹ Jesus Christ is the way that leads us forward and never halts ; He is the truth that speaks and is never silent ; He is the life that vivifies

¹ *Omnis qui bibit ex aqua hac, sitiet iterum ; qui autem biberit ex aqua quam ego dabo ei, non sitiet in aeternum. Sed aqua quam ego dabo ei, fiet in eo fons aquae salientis in vitam aeternam.* John, IV. 13, 14.

and never grows old nor dies, that is ever abundant and superabundant. ¹

St. Paul spoke of himself to the Corinthians as an imitator of Jesus Christ and pointed his apostolic teaching by this exhortation : « Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ ² ». Later on in his Epistle to Titus, embracing all humanity in one comprehensive outlook he asks wherein lies the true salvation of society ; and here is his answer : « For we ourselves also were some time unwise, incredulous, erring, slaves to diverse desires and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared ; not by works of justice, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost, whom he hath poured forth upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour ; that being justified by his grace, we may be heirs, according to hope of life everlasting. It is a faithful saying : and these things I will have thee affirm

¹ See development of these thoughts in a booklet bearing the title « *Jesus-Christ* », and composed of extracts from the Pastoral Letters of Monseigneur Gauthé-Soulard. Paris, 5 Rue Bayard, pp. 45-55.

² *Rogo ergo vos, imitatores mei estote sicut et ego Christi* — I Cor. IV, 16.

constantly : that they, who believe in God, may be careful to excel in good works. These things are good and profitable unto men ¹.

How is it, then, that the good example here inculcated is superior to mere verbal instruction ? It is because good example embodies in itself and communicates to others all the determining motives of action. Example brings strikingly before our senses and imagination the act that duty commands or counsels us to accomplish ; and when it is not merely a passing act, but the sustained habit of a life, that attracts and rivets our attention, it steadily forms and fastens in the soul those vivifying images that will nourish fruitful convictions and foster noble sentiments. How is it that among all our memories the one that is earliest, the memory of our mother, is the one that has sunk most deeply into the very marrow of our moral being ? It is

¹ *Eramus enim aliquando et nos insipientes... servientes desiderii et voluptatibus variis, in malitia et invidia agentes, odibiles, odientes invicem. Cum autem benignitas et humanitas apparuit Salvatoris nostri Dei, non ex operibus justitiae, quae fecimus nos, sed secundum suam misericordiam salvos nos fecit per lavacrum regenerationis et renovationis Spiritus Sancti, quem effudit in nos abunde per Jesum Christum, salvatorem nostrum ; ut justificati gratia ipsius, heredes simus secundum spem vitae aeternae. Fidelis sermo est, et de his volo te confirmare, ut curent bonis operibus praeesse qui credunt Deo. Haec sunt bona et utilia hominibus. Tit. III. 3-8.*

because from the days of our childhood our eyes were fixed upon our mother, our ears drank in her words ; her fostering care was all around us ; every fresh proof of her maternal tenderness was as a drop that sank through our imagination down to the depths of our being ; so that were the heart even as hard as granite those endless proofs of a mother's love would suffice to soften it. Many a young libertine have we known, who had become utterly dead to all the appeals and exhortations of his masters ; but when we found that the memory of his mother, and of the tears she shed for him, no longer moved him, we knew for certain that the time for his return to virtue had not yet come, and that there remained for us nothing but to wait and pray for better days.

Now, our Divine Saviour has held up before the eyes of all the example of His entire life. The child, the boy, the young man, the adult ; the labourer, the thinker, the teacher, the man of action : all alike find in Him their model. To those who are in joy He is a model whence they may learn moderation ; and those who suffer will draw from His example consolation and courage to endure. Whether in our duty towards God or towards our neighbour, He goes before us to shed light upon our paths. He has a look of kindly encouragement for those who conscientiously carry out His law, and a smile of tender

affection for those who endeavour to follow His counsels of perfection. To the weakest as well as to the bravest among us : to the average Christian as well as to the saint : to all of you in particular, my dear brothers, who are trying to advance along the road to perfection, He ever repeats in tones that are sometimes compassionate, sometimes proudly joyful, but invariably tender and paternal : « I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also ¹.

Our mother's influence was rooted in the love we bore her ; the warmer our filial affection grew, the greater the pleasure we felt at the devotion with which she cared and laboured and struggled to rear and educate us ; gladly we were drawn by all those motherly charms ; instinctively at first, then more deliberately, our infant piety prompted us to follow in her footsteps ; and thus was formed in us that ideal whose every trait was lit up with light and love : an ideal that no man can abandon without self-inflicted injury : a motive that must remain through life his most potent natural dictate of conduct, his last and surest safeguard. Now, where is there to be found a model so attractive as our Divine

¹ *Exemplum enim dedi vobis, ut quemadmodum ego feci vobis, ita et vos faciatis.* — John, XIII, 15.

Saviour ? For our sakes He became an infant in a crib : the pomp of the world repels the humble and embarrasses the poor : the majesty of material might compels unsympathetic aloofness ; even the omnipotence that works miracles only over-awes us ; but who would fear the sleeping infant nestling in its mother's bosom, the little child whom the simple shepherds came down from the mountain to gaze upon and worship, whom the aged and venerable Simeon received into his arms ? But no sooner is the infant born than the fury of a persecution bursts upon Him : He tastes all the bitterness of exile before He knows the comfort of a home. While yet in boyhood, He begins to reveal to the world that Divine influence by which He is to renew and sanctify it : He goes among the doctors in the Temple and speaks to them with authority : He boldly asserts in their presence the transcendent character of His mission ; and to His Mother who seeks Him sorrowing, He declares that the will of His Heavenly Father is above the most urgent appeals of the tenderest feelings even of a mother : « Did you not know, that I must be about my Father's business ¹ ? » Yes, the Will of His Father is indeed His first and all-absorbing

¹ *Nesciebatis quia in his quas Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse.* —Luke, II. 49.

interest ; to win the world for His Father is His one desire, the very object of His life, the sole reason and explanation of His embracing a life of sorrows. And what a life of self-sacrifice it was ! What constant life-long beneficence to all ! St. Luke, who minutely studied and described that life, sums up the Saviour's whole career in these words : He « went about doing good ¹ ». Not content with doing good to those He loved and who loved Him in return, His foster-father, His mother, His relatives and intimate friends — even the pagans, He said, love those that love them — He poured out His gifts on all, and without measuring His charity by the gratitude of those to whom He gave. It was to be said of St. Theresa in after times that the surest way to call for the disinterested love of her noble heart was to wound it by an act of ingratitude or contempt : here St. Theresa was but the pupil : the Teacher is our Divine Lord and Saviour, Jesus, hanging nailed to His cross ; Jesus, beholding therefrom the horrible crime of a deicide nation ; Jesus reviled by the cruel crowds whom a few days before He had fed with miraculous bread in the desert, whose diseases He had cured, and whose dead He had raised to life ; Jesus, forsaken by most of His

¹ *Pertransiit benefaciendo.* — Acts. X. 38.

friends and betrayed, by one of them ; drinking deeply of His bitter cup that overflowed with so many outrages ; yet finding in His Sacred Heart only words of compassion and forgiveness : « Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ¹ ».

O ! my dear Brothers, is there one of us who does not know all this ? Do we not read it every day in the crucifix hanging in our rooms, or attached to those rosary beads on which we daily pray ? Do we not read the Gospel in the books of the Sacred Scripture, in the Matins of our breviary, in the Liturgy of the Mass ? Is there one of us who does not preach it with faith to his parishioners, making it his duty to repeat in his heart of hearts the loving words of St Paul : « For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ ; and him crucified. » ²

Yet is it not unfortunately true that crowds of men, even in the midst of our Christian population, live as if they were still plunged in the darkness of paganism ? Their only God is an abstract power to which from time to time, in moments of pain and anguish, they send up a

¹ *Pater, dimitte illi non enim sciunt quid faciunt.* — Luke XXIII, 34.

² *Non enim judicavi me scire aliquid inter vos, nisi Jesum Christum ; et hunc crucifixum.* — I. Cor. II. 2.

hesitating, despairing appeal, as to some great but unknown being. Go forth into this desert, ye priests of Jesus Christ ! With fervour and earnestness invite these benighted souls to come out into the daylight of faith, and say to them : « There hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not ».¹

Come, then, and let us contemplate and admire Him together, encouraging one another to know Him better, to love Him more ardently. Year after year the liturgy of the Church portrays for us the story of His life ; it reminds us of the prophecies that foretold His coming ; it tells us of His Incarnation, of His birth on Jewish soil ; of His manifestation to the pagan world ; of His Redemption ; of the foundation of his Church and the mission of His Apostles ; while at the same time it sets forth the grand array of saintly men and women, immortal fruits of the saving sap of Christianity, and urges us to imitate their virtues.

The Church is a prudent mother : She realizes the truth of the popular saying : « Out of sight, out of mind » ; and hence to fortify us against our own weakness she is never weary of speaking to us about Him whom She would have us love ever more and more.

¹ *Medius autem vestrum stetit, quem vos nescitis.* Joan I. 26.

But we have something better still than the liturgical remembrance of Christ's mission on earth ; He Himself has left to us in the Blessed Eucharist the living memorial of the wonders of His life, passion and death : « He hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord : He hath given food to them that fear him. ¹ » « And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us ² ». Do we meditate sufficiently on all this ? When we meet with a private trial of any sort, or when we encounter an obstacle in the carrying out of some work of charity, do we not often run hither and thither in our trouble looking for light and protection from our fellow-men ? Not that I deprecate such seeking after human assistance ; by no means : it is right and lawful. But if we had fuller faith ; if we knew, if we felt with our whole being, that there, within a few steps of us, in that church where day after day we exercise our ministry, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself lives and abides ; that He is there as truly living and as real as when the apostles surrounded Him, gazed on Him, listened to Him on earth : as powerful and as glorious as He reigns in Heaven at the right hand of His

¹ *Memoriam fecit mirabilia suorum misericors et miserator Dominus, escam dedit timentibus se. — Ps. CX. 4.*

² *Et verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis. John, I. 14.*

Eternal Father ; if we were thoroughly penetrated with this thought, that the sole reason of His adoring and glorifying His Father in our tabernacles is His burning zeal for our souls ; His all-consuming desire to win them to Himself for ever ¹ ; if we realized how vividly and entirely His presence in our tabernacles should fill our souls with the thought of God and of our obligations to His Sovereign Majesty ; if we knew and felt all this, my dear brothers ; if we brought these thoughts home to ourselves, and let them sink into the innermost recesses of our being ; I put it to you sincerely : would we be so often indifferent to the Holy Eucharist, so often deserving of the Baptist's reproach : « There hath stood one in the midst of you whom you know not ! ² »

May this Retreat, then, mark an epoch in our spiritual lives ! Jesus Who came among us, and dwells among us for our sakes, must be no longer as a stranger in our midst. We must form the habit of living in the closest intimacy with Him : seeing Him so near us in our sanctuaries, on our altars, in our tabernacles ; beholding Him above us in heaven « always living to make

¹ *Propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de coelis, et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine et homo factus est.*

² *Medius vestrum stetit quem vos nescitis ! — John, I. 26.*

intercession for us » ¹ ; thinking expectantly of Him seated on His throne as supreme Judge of the living and the dead, inaugurating for us, after a period of Mercy that may be short, an era of Justice that will be without end and without change.

Example puts precept before our minds in concrete : this is its first great function ; but it has another : it answers the question that every thinking man will put to himself before he undertakes to act : « Have I the power to do this ? Shall I be able to accomplish what I have in mind ? »

« Yes », answers St. Augustine, « what others have done, that I can do ». ² Example decides, by facts, the problem of possibilities.

When we see our Divine Saviour like ourselves in everything except sin, fulfilling the whole law, and carrying out the counsels of perfection ; when on the other hand we realize what we possess in the sacraments, in prayer, in those copious interior aids by which the Holy Spirit dispels our ignorance of our own needs, and enables us to send up to the throne of God aspirations too deep and too strong for words : « The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity. For we

¹ *Semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis.* — Hebr. VII, 25.

² *Quod isti et istae, cur non ego ?*

know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings ¹ ; when we see ourselves enriched with such means of grace as will enable us to attain even to the most heroic sanctity ; who is there among us who, if he were so unfortunate as to lose his soul, would dare to hold himself blameless for its loss ? No, my dear brothers, you know as well as I do that there is not a damned soul in Hell that might not be a saint in Heaven. The evidence of truth will force the reprobate to acknowledge it themselves : « Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right » . ² « And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what the spirit desireth : because he asketh for the saints according to God. And we know that to them that love God, all things worketh together unto good, to such as according to his purpose are called to be saints. For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son : that he might be the first-born amongst many brethren... He that spared not even his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also,

¹ *Spiritus adjuvat infirmitatem nostram ; nam, quid oremus, sicut oportet, nescimus ; sed ipse Spiritus postulat pro nobis gemitibus inenarrabilibus.* Rom. VIII. 26.

² *Iustus es, Domine, et rectum iudicium tuum.* Ps. CXVIII, 137.

with him, given us all things ? » ¹ Jehovah, in Isaias, addresses Himself to His beloved people and to them : « O ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and ye men of Juda, judge between me and my vineyard. What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it ? was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought forth wild grapes ? »

My dear brothers, why do not our souls always bring forth the good fruits which the Lord of the Vineyard expects from us ? God « predestinated (us) to be made conformable to the image of his Son » : how do we copy our Divine Model ? Watch the children in our schools or the learners in our art academies. The child who would learn to write must copy stroke for stroke the characters the teacher sets before him. The heedless ones scarcely look at the headline ; they do not

¹ *Qui autem scrutatur corda, scit quid desideret Spiritus, quia secundum Deum postulat pro sanctis. Scimus autem quoniam diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum, iis qui secundum propositum vocati sunt sancti. Nam quos praeescivit et praedestinavit conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui, ut sit ipse primogenitus in multis fratribus... Qui etiam proprio Filio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum, quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis donavit. Rom. VIII. 27-32.*

² *Nunc ergo habitatores Jerusalem et viri Juda, judicate inter me et vineam meam. Quid est quod debui ultra facere vineae meae et non feci ei ? An quod expectavi ut faceret uvas et fecit labruscas ? Isaias, V. 3, 4.*

take time to consider it attentively ; they have not the patience to follow it with application and to continue repeating their efforts till it is faithfully reproduced ; and as a result they will never write well.

Look at that young painter before his canvas : he has succeeded in copying with a fidelity that is almost servile the smallest details of a master-piece ; but mere material precision is not excellence here. The pupil who is gifted with an artist's soul will burn to *understand* the master-piece, to enter into it and make it in some sort *his own*. He will strive to live himself into it till his whole being vibrates in unison with it. He will never rest until by force of intense penetration and sustained effort he makes the work of the master-hand live again under his brush ; until he has reached as nearly as possible the standpoint of the master and seen the rays of light and warmth proceed once more from the inspiring idea, as from the centre whence they diffuse their light and warmth all around. Away with the idler ! There is no place for him in the School of the Master ! But all honour to the artist ! May he succeed !

When we love, St. Thomas excellently says, the object of our love abides in our thoughts. It was in this sense St. Paul said to the Philippians : « I have you in my heart. Furthermore, he who

loves is attached to the object of his love in this sense also, that he is not content to have a mere superficial acquaintance with it ; he strives to penetrate it, to consider and dwell upon whatever in any way appertains to it, — in a word, to reach the very soul of what He loves » ¹. My dear brothers, until you study with assiduity in the school of the Divine Master, until you make it your whole aim to *understand* Him, to learn all you can of His ways and of Himself, until for that purpose you make it a law of your lives to follow Him with eager attention through all the stages of His life on earth, through His hidden life, His ministry, His passion, His crucifixion, through the mysteries of His life in the Eucharist ; until you concentrate all the faculties of your soul upon each of those stages in fervent and docile prayer, with the will to *assimilate* them, to absorb them into the very marrow of your spiritual life ; — you may perhaps reproduce some

¹ Amatum dicitur esse in amante, inquantum amatum immoratur in apprehensione amantis, secundum illud Philipp. I. 7. *Eo quod habeam vos in corde*. Amans vero dicitur esse in amato secundum apprehensionem, inquantum amans non est contentus superficiali apprehensione amati, sed nititur singula quae ad amatum pertinent, intrinsecus disquirere, et sic ad interiora ejus ingreditur ; sicut de Spiritu Sancto qui est amor Dei, dicitur I. Cor. II. 10, quod *scrutatur etiam profunda Dei* ». Ia 2^{ae}, q. 28, art. 2.

superficial traits of our Divine Ideal, — but you will not realize in your lives a work of Christian art, a living, harmonious, communicative form of holiness.

Example embraces, as we have already said, all the determining principles of action. It shows forth the idea, it invites imitation by proving imitation possible, and it has yet a third purpose to fulfil : it gives a sanction to the teaching of him who sets it. Pascal used to say in reference to the early martyrs, « I believe in witnesses who seal their testimony with their blood. » So long as a man's conduct is seen only from the outside, one is free to doubt whether it is actuated by disinterested motives or a desire for personal advantage. But when a man is seen to act against his own material interests, to sacrifice his own comfort and ambitions to the furtherance of some cause, there is no room for doubt : that man is unselfish, he is sincere. It is therefore right and wise to put our whole trust in Him who laid down His life to prove the sincerity of His words, who in fulfilment of the will of His Father reduced Himself to a state which St. Paul, in one of those daring expressions that characterize his preaching, calls an annihilation : The Son of God, he tells us, « being in the form of God... emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant... He humbled

himself, becoming obedient unto death : even to the death of the cross. » ¹ Yes, I have faith in Jesus Christ : « I live in the faith of the Son of God. » ² I will trust Him on His own word ; I will follow Him with the docility of a child ; I will do my utmost to imitate His example. He is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.

CONCLUSION.

My dear brothers, the first and most important of our duties, the one that stands out over the horizon of every human creature, was already proclaimed in the Old Law in these words : « Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind » ³. But Jesus Christ alone can lead us efficaciously to God. His Father has committed all power to Him. What the Father is He alone knows, and after Him those to whom He vouchsafes to reveal it. « All things are delivered to me by my Father.... neither doth anyone know the Father, but the

¹ *Qui cum in forma Dei esset.... semetipsum exinanivit, formam servi accipiens... Humiliavit semetipsum, factus obediens usque ad mortem. mortem autem crucis. — Philipp. II. 6. 7, 8.*

² *In fide vivo Filii Dei. — Gal. II. 20.*

³ *Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo et in tota anima tua et in tota mente tua. — Matt. XXII. 37.*

Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal him » ¹. There is then obviously but one thing for us to do : respond to the appeal of Jesus who calls to us all so tenderly : « Come to me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you » ². Delay not to take my yoke upon your shoulders, and to study in my school that you may learn how to bear it : « Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart : and you shall find rest to your souls, for my yoke is sweet and my burden light » ³. Yes, my dear friends, the *first* fruit of this meditation should be *an earnest desire to respond* to such a tender and pressing appeal from Him who is our Brother and Friend, our God and God-Man, our Lord Jesus Christ ; and a fixed and firm purpose to stand before Him in all sincerity, loyalty and trustfulness, ever prompt to learn.

Such response on our part must seem a simple

¹ *Omnia mihi tradita sunt a Patre meo... Neque Patrem quis novit, nisi Filius et cui voluerit Filius revelare.* — Matt. XI. 27.

² *Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis et ego reficiam vos.* — Matt. XI. 28.

³ *Tollite jugum meum super vos et discite a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde : et invenietis requiem animabus vestris ; jugum enim meum suave est et onus meum leve.* — Matt. XI. 29, 30.

and easy thing. At the outset He asks us for nothing more. Jesus, to whom we shall go with open and confiding hearts, will not leave us to perish from hunger : « I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way » ¹. He will take care of us, for He had pity on the crowd in the desert : « I have compassion on the multitudes, because they continue with me now three days » ². Only let us too, like the multitude that for three whole days followed His footsteps refusing to leave Him — let us too learn to wait patiently for God's own time, for the hour fixed by Divine Wisdom from all eternity. Let us hunger and thirst after justice ; let us ever foster the desire for still greater purity of heart ; let us accept, even with tears, for the glory of God's holy Name, all worldly opposition and contempt : our Master will show us the way, He will take us by the hand and keep us in the right path.

Confidence in the help of God, then will be the *second* fruit of our mediation. It is your desire to imitate our Lord : you have resolved to imitate Him. His own authoritative words have echoed within your souls : « I have given you an example,

¹ *Dimittere eos jejunos nolo, ne deficiant in via* Matt. XV. 32.

² *Misereor turbas, quia triduo jam perseverant mecum.* — *ibid.*

that as I have done to you, so you do also » ¹.

Let me invite you, my dear brothers, to compare one of your days with one of those which Our Divine Saviour deigned, for our edification, to spend on earth. Consider, not with wandering eye and indifferent heart, not with the carelessness that is near to contempt, but with an attention born of affection and devotion, consider His way of dealing with little children, with the poor ; His charity towards the sick ; His compassion for sinners, so tender and inexhaustible ; and ask yourselves whether you think, whether you speak, whether you act, whether you love, whether, if need be, you suffer, as did Our Lord Jesus Christ. Have no doubt that the desire of imitation which will arise in your souls from thus confronting what you are yourselves with what your divine Model is for you, have no doubt, I say, that this desire will be the most beautiful and powerful prayer you can send up to the throne of God. Herein, if I mistake not, we have these « ineffable groanings » of which St. Paul speaks and of which the Holy Spirit alone can be the source.

Such converse of your whole soul with our Divine Lord will always leave you stronger, more generous, more detached, more fully elevated above

¹ *Exemplum dedi vobis ut quemadmodum ego feci, ita et vos faciatis.* John, XIII. 15.

your natural self : and this is exactly the state to which you should strive to attain. Under the influence of your Divine Ideal, you must cease to take account of self, to cling to your own interests or the works that are dearest to your missionary spirit or even the loftiest efforts you may make on behalf of our poor and erring humanity : higher than all these and all created things, high above the saints and angels and the Blessed Virgin Mary, nay, high above the Most Holy Humanity Itself of Our Lord Jesus Christ, even in the bosom of the Ever Blessed Trinity, you will learn to contemplate the Eternal Father Himself, and to send up to Him the inmost aspirations of your heart. Yes, you will prepare your souls from now for the final exercise of this Retreat, when, prostrate before the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist, you will forget for the moment all that is not God Himself, and repeat with a feeling of complete detachment those words you first pronounced in youthful accents on the day you entered the ranks of the Clergy : « What have I in heaven ? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth ?... Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever » ¹. That is how Jesus loved His

¹ *Quid enim mihi est in coelo et a te quid volui super terram ? Deus cordis mei et pars mea, Deus, in aeternum. Ps. LXXII. 25, 26.*

Father ; consequently, that is how we are to love Him too. His sentiments must be ours, and we shall not be His pupils, His disciples, until we can bear witness to ourselves that the spirit which animated Jesus is become also the very soul of our souls ; « Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus ¹.

So often had the Apostles heard the Master speak of His Father that they had been perplexed by it, but at last the solemn occasion came when He announced to them the approaching close of His earthly career and the termination of His intimate human intercourse with them. It was after the last supper. Their hearts were heavy with the presentiment of impending separation, the feeling of coming sorrows hung over them like a pall. There was a heavy silence. Jesus was announcing His departure ; and with words breathing consolation and confidence He was telling them of the time when they would no more see Him in bodily form : « Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me..... And whither I go you know, and the way you know » ². But Thomas breaks their silence :

¹ *Hoc enim sentite in vobis quod et in Christo Jesu.* — Philip. II. 5.

² *Non turbetur cor vestrum. Creditis in Deum et in me credite.... Et quo ego vado, scitis, et viam scitis.* — John, XIV. 1-4.

« Lord, we know not whither thou goest ; and how can we know the way ? ¹ And Jesus, ever kind and gentle and inalterably patient makes answer : « I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me. ² But apparently the strain of suspense and perplexity becomes too great for the apostles, and Philip expresses the thought of all by interposing : « Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us ! » ³ This time the accent of the Master's reply is one of mingled grief and love, and gentle, plaintive reproach amounting almost to disappointment : « So long a time have I been with you ; and you have not known me ? Philip, he that seeth me, seeth the Father also. How sayest thou, show us the Father ? ⁴

Oh ! My Lord Jesus, the reproach addressed to Philip falls upon others too. *I* feel it in all its bitterness, because at last I realise all its truth. For many years Thou hast lived quite close to

¹ *Dicit ei Thomas : Domine, nescimus quo vadis ; et quomodo possumus viam scire ? — Ibid. 5.*

² *Dicit ei Jesus : Ego sum via et veritas et via. Nemo venit ad Patrem nisi per me. — Ibid. 6.*

³ *Dicit ei Philippus : Domine, ostende nobis Patrem, et sufficit nobis. — Ibid. 8.*

⁴ *Dicit ei Jesus : Tanto tempore vobiscum sum et non cognovistis me. Philippe, qui videt me, videt et Patrem. Quomodo tu dicis : Ostende nobis Patrem. — Ibid. 9.*

me ! Nay, what do I say ? Hast Thou not lived in me by the grace which was given me in Baptism, and increased within me at Confirmation ? by the Holy Eucharist which brings Thee down into my hands and into my heart every day of my life ? Hast Thou not for years associated me with Thyself in Thy ministry. after admitting me to Holy Orders and anointing my hands with the holy oil of the priesthood ? And yet, now that the bustle of life is silenced for a moment around me, now that my imagination is stilled and my restless nature subdued for a while in this retreat, behold, I can see most clearly revealed before me how small, how very small, is the place Thou dost occupy in my life ! My intercourse with others, my reading, my studies, worldly distractions, the preoccupations of merely human science, external works, — these things occupy a larger place in my heart than Thy adorable and ever blessed Person ! I am filled with shame at this thought, O my Jesus, and with Thy all-powerful aid I earnestly purpose to amend. I resolve to go to God and learn to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him with my whole soul and my whole strength. I resolve to go to Him through Thee ; henceforth I shall go to Him only through Thee ; I will strive to know Thee, and from Thee to learn to

know Him ; my watchword shall be the word of St. Paul : « For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified »¹. I will try to love Thee in order to learn to love Him and I will despise and avoid all love that would exclude the love of Thee : « If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema »². I will strive to imitate Thee ; that thereby I may draw the souls under my care to imitate Thee also ; and that I may have a right to say to them in all sincerity : « Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ »³.

Let us all, my dear brothers, proclaim it openly : we wish to glorify God by Christ, *Deum colimus per Christum*. Tertullian, speaking of the martyrs, proclaimed it to their persecutors : « We profess and declare it aloud, and even while you torture us and draw the blood from our wounds we shout in your very face this warning of our faith : We adore God, adoring Christ. You may think Him to be mere man ; but we know

¹ *Non enim judicavi me scire aliquid inter vos nisi Jesum, et hunc crucifixum.* — I Cor. II. 2.

² *Si quis non amat Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, sit anathema.* — I Cor. XVI, 22.

³ *Rogo ergo vos : imitatores mei estote sicut et ego Christi.* — I. Cor. IV. 16.

that it is in Him and by Him that God wishes to be known and adored. ¹.

SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD, Lord God, King of Heaven and Earth, deign to direct and sanctify, to rule and govern, this day, our hearts and our bodies, our thoughts, words and actions, according to Thy law and the works Thou hast commanded : so that with Thy assistance we may deserve salvation and redemption both here and hereafter : who livest and reignest for ever and ever. Amen.

Dirigere et sanctificare, regere et gubernare dignare, Domine Deus, Rex coeli et terrae, hodie corda a corpora nostra, sensus, sermones et actus nostros in lege tua et in operibus mandatorum tuorum : ut hic et in aeternum, te auxiliante, salvi et liberi esse mereamur, SALVATOR MUNDI : Qui vivis et regnas in saecula saeculorum. Amen. ¹

¹ *Dicimus et palam dicimus et vobis torquentibus lacerati et cruenti vociferamur : Deum colimus per Christum. Illum hominem putate ; per eum et in eo se cognosci vult Deus et coli. — Tertull. Apol. XXI.*

² Dominica ad Primam.

§ 4. THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIEST TO GOD
ALONE.

SEVENTH DISCOURSE.

**The Mission of the Priest as Representative of
Humanity before God.**

- I. -- The Priest is Consecrated to God.
 - II. -- The Priest's Mission is to offer Sacrifice and Praise to God.
-

§ 4. THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIEST TO GOD
ALONE.

SEVENTH DISCOURSE.

**The Mission of the Priest as Representative of
Humanity before God.**

*Sacerdotem etenim oportet
offerre et benedicere.*

« The mission of the priest
is to offer sacrifice and
praise ».

(Pont. Rom. In ordinatione
presbyteri).

My dear brothers, when I was teaching philosophy I had to begin my first lesson every year by explaining the three stages of human knowledge. The unlettered man is conscious of facts, he observes events as they happen, but does not seek to know the why or the wherefore of them. The man of science tries to understand the facts he observes : their origin, their connection, their purpose, form the subject-matter of his investigations, analyses and experiments. But the domain of the

scientist is necessarily restricted ; it is for the philosopher, for him whom the ancients called « sapiens », the wise man *par excellence*, to take in the universality of things and events and to make more searching inquiry into their nature, their first origin and their final destiny. The general reasons put forth in explanation of the universe form the object of the speculative wisdom known nowadays by the name of philosophy.

It is universally admitted that among the causes which account for the existence of the universe the *final* cause ranks in importance over the others. And hence the conclusion that the ultimate goal of the aspirations of the human soul is God, the supreme end of the universe. Thus the last word of philosophy is the first of the catechism : « Man came into the world to know, to love and to serve God ». The wise man, in the speculative sense of this word, is the philosopher ; but the simple man who works for God, and submits his life to God, does more than conceive or admire wisdom speculatively, he realizes it in practice : he is therefore the wise man, in the practical and true sense of the word wisdom.

My dear brothers, have you ever asked yourselves what is the real age of the « use of reason » ? It is not the age at which a child begins to reason ; long before the age of seven the intellects

of little children are awake and at work in a way entirely impossible even to the highest representatives of the animal kingdom. The « age of reason », then does not mean the age at which a child begins to think ; it means the age at which the person acquires the power to *reflect*, and to apply this power to his free acts so as to grasp their moral significance. This age is attained when the child has realized that there is above him a Sovereign Being who has the right to rule over him and whom he is bound to obey.

Man is in this world to know, to love, and to serve God ; this first lesson of the catechism is the root-principle of all practical wisdom. In its faithful observance lies the whole code of human dignity ; it makes what the Scripture calls « all man, » all that is specifically human in man : « Fear God and keep the commandments, for this is all man. »¹ And when St. Ignatius of Loyola, in his solitude at Manresa and under a special impulse of grace, sets himself to co-ordinate in one magnificent system the rules and counsels that are to lead the most generous souls to the highest heights of perfection, he makes this same truth the foundation of the whole

¹ *Deum time et mandata ejus observa ; hoc est anim omnis homo.* — Eccl. XII. 13.

spiritual edifice ¹ « But then, » says Saint Bernard, « if the purpose of man's existence lies in submission to God, it follows that the man who does not obey God has no justification for living, and is really nothing at all ». ² It follows too that our words are rigorously true when we say with St. Augustine and Bossuet that sin is an act of insanity. When you see a man without the faculty of adapting his acts to their natural ends, or his language to the expression of a definitely conceived thought, you pronounce him « insane, » you say that his mind is unbalanced, that he has « lost his reason ». The man who

¹ « Creatus est homo ad hunc finem, ut Dominum Deum suum laudet, ac revereatur, eique serviens tandem salvus fiat. Reliqua vero supra terram sita creata sunt hominis ipsius causa, et eum ad finem creationis suae prosequendum juvent : unde sequitur, utendum illis vel abstinendum eatenus esse, quatenus ad prosecutionem finis vel conferunt vel obsunt. Quapropter debemus absque differentia nos habere circa res creatas omnes (prout libertati arbitrii nostri subjectae sunt, et non prohibitae) : ita ut (quod in nobis est) non quaeramus sanitatem magis quam aegritudinem, neque divitias paupertati, honorem contemptui, vitam longam brevi praeferamus. Sed consentaneum est, ex omnibus ea demum, quae ad finem ducunt, eligere ac desiderare ». S. Ignatii *Exercitia Spiritualia* : Principium sive Fundamentum.

² *Ergo si hoc est omnis homo, absque hoc nihil omnis homo.* — S. Bernardus, super Cantica Cantic. Sermo XX.

is of age to understand the ultimate purpose of the moral order and who does not subordinate his acts to it, may indeed have retained the power to reason correctly ; but those acts of his which are not duly subordinated to their end are unreasonable, and really symptomatic of what is in truth insanity. « To abandon what is all-perfect for what is less perfect ¹, is to show unreason.

My dear brothers, during the early days of the Retreat we meditated on those fundamental truths by which human life should be governed, and we asked God's pardon for having so often abused the highest gifts of our nature by offending Him. We also considered what is required of us by our dignity as Christians Disciples of Jesus Christ, redeemed by His merits, brought up in His school, we should have His Divine example ever before our minds : He is « the way, and the truth, and the life » ; and we are doubly guilty and ungrateful when we sully by sin those souls of ours that have been ransomed in Baptism. The noise our enemies are wont to make when they see any weakness or failing in the ranks of Christ's army, is usually on their part a deliberate and

¹ *Ab eo quod summe est ad id quod minus est deficere.* — S. Aug. *De Civit. Dei*, XII. 8. Cfr. 5th Discourse, p.

premeditated exhibition of Pharisaic indignation ; but, considered from our own standpoint, their complaints are justified. For we profess to follow a higher ideal than mankind in general ; and God gives to us the graces we need for fidelity to this ideal : *noblesse oblige* ; the higher the elevation, the more ignominious the fall : the more deliberate the sin, the greater the enormity.

So far we have addressed you as men and as Christians ; for the remainder of this Retreat we shall fix our attention on the character you have from your priesthood. You are priests, my dear brothers ; and let me therefore commend to your earnest attention, during these days of grace, the words of St. Paul to his disciple, Timothy : « Neglect not the grace that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with imposition of the hands of the priesthood ¹ » . What is this grace which the apostle urges us not to neglect ? What is the mission whose success it is to insure ? By what means are we to make this gift of God bear fruit ? Our remaining Discourses will be devoted to answering these questions.

¹ *Noli negligere gratiam quae in te est, quae data est tibi per prophetiam cum impositione manuum presbyterii.* — I. Tim. IV. 14.

I cannot say how thankful I am to you, my dear brothers, for the pious attention with which you have followed the Discourses so far. Yet I must venture to ask you now for an attention even more careful and sustained, and I do so because as a rule the motives that influence our souls are all the more powerful the better they respond to the needs of our souls. The appeal will henceforth be more direct and efficacious. You will realize, therefore, that nothing can be more decisive for the proper orientation of your lives towards Him who must be all in all to you — « *Deus meus et omnia* » — than the two meditations on the priesthood by which we will complete the Exercises of this Retreat.

The apostle St. Paul says in his Epistle to the Hebrews that the priest is a man whose mission it is to represent before God the religious interests of humanity, and with this end in view to offer Him gifts and expiatory sacrifices : « For every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for man in things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins¹. » Then he goes on to insist on this thought, that the priest, in spite of his high supernatural

¹ *Omnis namque Pontifex ex hominibus assumptus, pro hominibus constituitur in iis quae sunt ad Deum ut offerat dona et sacrificia pro peccatis* — Hebr. V. 1.

dignity, remains subject to all the infirmities of our poor human nature, and that he is consequently obliged to offer sacrifice for the expiation of his own miseries as well as for those of the multitude : « who can have compassion on them that are ignorant and that err : because he himself also is compassed with infirmity, and therefore he ought as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins »¹.

The Roman Pontifical sums up thus the obligations of the priesthood : The priest must offer sacrifice and praise, he must govern and preach and baptize ². Here the priest is seen in his twofold character : he is the representative of man's religious interests before God, and as such he offers sacrifice and praise. He is also the ambassador of God to man, and as such he also offers sacrifice and praise, but in addition he governs souls, preaches the doctrine of Christ, and administers the sacraments. In the present Discourse we shall consider the priest in the first of these characters, reserving the second for the following Discourse. We shall speak to

¹ *Qui condolere possit iis qui ignorant et errant quoniam et ipse circumdatus est infirmitate et propterea debet quemadmodum pro populo, ita etiam et pro semetipso offerre pro peccatis. — Hebr. V. 3.*

² *Sacerdotem etenim oportet offerre, benedicere praeesse, praedicare et baptizare.*

you to-day of the *Mission of the priest before God* and we shall consider the subject under two heads :

I. — The Priest is consecrated to God.

II. — The Priest's Mission is to offer Sacrifice and Praise to God.

I.

The Priest is consecrated to God.

Do you remember, my dear brothers, the earliest call of God within your souls. It may have been on the day of your first communion : kneeling before the Tabernacle in an atmosphere of piety, lifted out of all else and rapt in God, who for the first time made you realize that under the Eucharistic veil He had given Himself entirely to you ; thrilling with the fervour of your gratitude and burning with desire to love Him and to give yourself to Him in return, you longed to find expression for your joy, and you felt a desire to share it with all around you. You would fain have cried out to your father, mother, brothers, companions, to everyone, these words of Peter on Mount Thabor : « Lord, it is good for us to be here : if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles » ¹. But whenever and

¹ *Domine, bonum est nos hic esse ! Si vis, faciamus hic tria tabernacula.* — Matt. XVII. 4.

wherever you may have first experienced these yearnings, at all events the day came when you entered this Seminary. The roof that shelters you to-day, the little room you occupy, must bring up many memories of that evening ten, twenty, thirty years ago, when for the first time you found yourselves cut off from the world by the walls of this home of prayer where nothing profane can enter, and by the cassock you assumed with a glad farewell to worldly vanities. You had bidden adieu to your families, not indeed without pain, but still without regret : your minds were full of thoughtful projects and noble aspirations, though perhaps fatigued with the long struggle from which you had come forth victorious. Like the Alpine traveller who after an arduous ascent stands panting on the summit with chest expanded to inhale the keen air, and revelling in the brilliant sunshine surveys with pride, and not without a suggestion of distain, the fog and smoke and mist that hide the valleys far beneath : so, perhaps, did your thoughts revert to your school-mates who had remained in the world ; and, overcome by an impulse the beneficent influence of which you welcomed without well adverting to its origin, you had to cry out to God in the secret of your hearts : « My God, let others choose if they wish the life of the world with its divers interests ; let their care be for earthly advantage ; let their

hearts, if Thou so willest, cling to a creature : I do not blame them ; I shall even praise them if they ultimately refer their complex lives to Thee, o God ; but for my part I am determined to simplify my life and henceforth to live for Thee alone ». No affection of my heart will ever be given to a creature ; no part of my time will be absorbed in any work that is not directly for Thee ; no effort of my soul will be spent on any interests other than those that are eternal. My God, it is Thou whom I desire to love and serve,

Thou alone, Thou always : *Dominus pars hereditatis mea et calicis mea*. Thou art enough for me, I need nought else. I know that it will cost an effort to keep my word ; I have already experienced how weak I am, and I shall not be so blind as to trust to myself ; it is Thou, O my God, who wilt be my helper, and who by Thy powerful, paternal Providence wilt keep the treasure reserved for Thy chosen ones : « It is thou that wilt restore [confirm] my inheritance to me ¹ ».

Oh, what a noble aim it was ! What a holy mission ! And how often those thoughts have returned to us, in our communions, during our retreats, or as we assisted at the ordination of a former

¹ *Tu es qui restituas, [stabilies] hereditatem meam mihi.* — Ps. XV. 5.

school-fellow ! Let us now again recall to mind that thrice blessed moment when, deeply penetrated with the feeling of our unworthiness, we lay prostrate on the Cathedral pavement, awaiting the incomparable honour of the priesthood. We had just made a retreat of ten days, in which we had resolutely fixed our every thought on things divine. We knew that the faithful had just finished a solemn triduum of prayer and penance for the purification of our souls. And now the bishop, the clergy, the faithful, are pleading for us with God, our Heavenly Father ; God, the Redeemer of the world ; God, the Holy Spirit ; the Trinity of Divine Persons in one only God ; the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God ; the Angels ; the Patriarchs and Prophets ; the Apostles and Evangelists ; the Pontiffs and Confessors ; the Martyrs and Virgins. The Church Militant sends up its petitions for us to the Church Triumphant ; she leads the chant and we re-echo the petitions : « That Thou wouldst spare us ; *ut nobis parcas* ; — That Thou wouldst forgive us ; — *ut nobis indulgeas* ; — That Thou wouldst bring us to true repentance, — *ut ad veram poenitentiam nos perducere digneris* ; — That Thou wouldst raise up our minds to heavenly desires, — *ut mentes nostras ad coelestia desideria erigas*, — we beseech Thee, hear us, — *Te rogamus audi nos*. » And then as you remember, the

Pontiff rose, extended his right hand over us, and thrice pronounced the words that were to transform our lives : words that meant for us the crossing of the Red Sea, the passage from the profane land of Egypt to the sacred soil of the Promised Land : —

« *Ut hoc electos BENEDICERE digneris.* — These chosen ones, these privileged souls, the elect of a Christian people ; vouchsafe to *bless* them.

« *Ut hos electos benedicere et SANCTIFICARE digneris.* — Deign to *bless* and *sanctify* them.

« *Ut hos electos, benedicere, sanctificare et CONSECRARE digneris : Te rogamus, audi nos.* — That Thou wouldst deign to *bless* and *sanctify* and *consecrate* them ; we beseech Thee, hear us. »,

What a moment that was, my dear brothers ! You have not forgotten it ; but do you still think of it often enough ? The ceremony so far, however, was only the prelude, the introduction, to the most solemn moment of all, the most important moment of our lives. Silence falls on the whole assembly ; all are standing erect, motionless, expectant. The Pontiff himself is silent ; God alone speaks now. The levite kneels before his bishop, but he holds his head erect, for he realizes the nobility of his sacrifice, and he is proud of his self-surrender. The Pontiff stands mitred, in the fullest exercise of the power he holds from God. In the name of God, the

sovereign Master of all, he lays both hands on the levite's head to signify that he holds him segregated from things profane, as the High Priest of the Old Law withdrew from the ordinary usages of life the victims destined for the altar ; so the Bishop takes possession of this consecrated soul and officially attests that it is accepted by God and devoted henceforth exclusively and irrevocably to the service of His altars. In the Name of Christ, the Redeemer, he attests that this soul immolates itself for guilty man, and that Christ accepts the vicarious sacrifice. The priests around unite with the Pontiff to proclaim to all, by the same silent imposition of hands, the twofold office of worship and intercession conferred at ordination. Then the bishop invites the assembly to beg of God, the Father Almighty, to pour abundant blessings on these His elect, so that by His help they may be equal to the mission He has vouchsafed to entrust to them : *Oremus, fratres, carissimi, Deum Patrem omnipotentem, ut super hos famulos quos ad Presbyterii munus elegit, coelestia dona multiplicet ; et quod ejus dignatione suscipiunt, ipsius consequantur auxilio. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.*

The assembly kneels and the bishop implores the Lord God to hear the prayers of all ; to pour out upon the souls of His servants the blessing of His Holy Spirit and the sacramental grace of

the Priesthood. He presents them to God that they may be *consecrated* to Him, and ever surrounded by the abundance of His favours : *Exaudi nos, quaesumus, Domine Deus noster, et super hos famulos tuos benedictionem Sancti Spiritus, et GRATIAE SACERDOTALIS infunde virtutem, ut quos tuae pietatis aspectibus offerimus CONSECRANDOS, perpetua muneris tui largitate prosequaris. Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate ejusdem Spiritus Sancti, Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen.*

Once more I ask you, my dear brothers, do you *often* recall that decisive moment of your ordination to the priesthood ? Do we not need the silent hours of a Retreat to live those solemn moments over again and to revive in our souls their salutary impressions ? If our memory of that momentous event has grown weak, or the vision of our priestly conscience grown dim, it is none the less true that the Character of the Sacrament of Holy Orders has preserved its living mark within us ; it is as true to-day as on the day of our ordination ten, twenty, thirty years ago, that we are become priests, or rather that we are chosen by God and incorporated by Him into the priestly order to be and to remain irrevocably consecrated to Him. Yes, we are by vocation, and have become by our state as consecrated or *separated from*

profane uses, *inviolable beings devoted exclusively to the service of God*. The Character of Holy Orders, which we have received, has isolated us once and for ever from the profane world ; has severed us not only from its vices and follies, but even from its legitimate preoccupation with business, prosperity, display, or enjoyment. There may no longer dwell in our minds a single thought that does not either directly or indirectly tend towards God. We may no longer have in our hearts a single fibre that does not beat in unison with the heart of God.

At the altar you make use of a chalice and a paten, or you place a ciborium in the tabernacle with the most reverential care. These vessels have been consecrated by a bishop : which means that, by order of the Church, he withdrew them from all profane use and destined them exclusively for divine service, so that you could not apply them to any ordinary purpose of life, how legitimate soever it might be, without committing what in christian language is so aptly and forcibly termed a profanation, a sacrilege. But yourselves are the living vessels which Christ has placed upon His altars and encloses in His tabernacles. You have received more than a ritual consecration : the holy oil that was poured upon your hands symbolized the spiritual unction by which was given to you the Holy

Ghost Himself who is the consubstantial Gift of the Most High, the source of supernatural life, the fire of charity ¹ : transforming those hands into faithful images of the divine Anointed one, of Jesus the *Christ*, and placing them for ever in immediate dependence on Him in the discharge of the functions of His supreme priesthood among men.

On the day of your elevation to the diaconate these words were addressed to you : « Receive the Holy Spirit for strength in resisting the devil and his temptations » ². That is to say : Receive the Holy Ghost with a special intention that is still personal : that you may find strength against the attacks and snares of the ubiquitous tempter ; that the sanctifying grace of the sacrament may shield you from the perils of the flesh and the world ; that it may give dazzling whiteness to your souls, preserving them in spotless chastity as is fitting in a minister of Christ, delegated by Him to be the dispenser of the divine Mysteries to men ³.

¹ *Altissimi donum Dei, fons vivus, ignis, caritas et spiritalis unctio.*

² *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum ad robur et ad resistendum diabolo et tentationibus ejus.*

³ *Et tu, fili dilectissime... esto assumptus a carnalibus desideriis, a terrenis, concupiscentiis, quae militant adversus animam : esto nitidus, mundus, purus, castus, sicut decet ministrum Christi et dispensatorem mysteriorum Dei. — Rom. Pont. (In ordinatione Diaconi).*

But when you were raised to the priesthood the Church assumed your personal sanctification to be complete ; it was for the sake of others, to enable you to wash out the stains of sinners, that the Holy Spririt consecrated you : « Receive the Holy Ghost ; whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven, whose sins you shall retain they are retained » ¹. And when the Church consecrates a bishop she gives him, with the fulness of the priesthood, not the Holy Ghost for his own sanctification, nor with restrictions as to any special intention, but, as Monseigneur Dupanloup remarks in his *Journal Intime*, she gives him the Holy Ghost without reserve, « *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum* », simply, sublimely.

Christ, the First Priest, the perfect model of the priest's life, cut every link that could have bound Him to the land of His family and His birth ; He had neither home, nor wife, nor children ; and when His mother, His peerless mother, not yet fully enlightened as to the aim of His sacred ministry, seemed disposed to keep Him wholly within the circle of family life, and to hasten His return to Nazareth, He answered Her : « How is it that you sought me ? did you

¹ *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum ; quarum remisieris peccata, remittuntur eis et quorum retinueris, retenta sunt.* — Rom. Pont. *In ordinatione presbyteri.*

not know that I must be about my Father's business » ¹ ? And another time, to those who interrupted His preaching to tell Him that His mother and relatives were waiting for Him, did He not answer : « Who is my mother, and who are my brethren ? And stretching forth His hand towards His disciples, he said : Behold my mother and my brethren. For whoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother » ². His first words when He came into this world, St. Paul observes in the Epistle to the Hebrews, were those in which He offered Himself to His Eternal Father, the Sovereign God : « Behold I come to do thy will, O God » ³. He lived for sacrifice alone : the hour which He called in a special way. « *His hour* » was that in which, stripped of everything, crushed with suffering, bruised from head to foot, feeling that His exhausted body must soon succumb ; groaning under the curse which Divine Justice had laid upon Him on account of the sins of men wherewith He clothed Himself as with an unclean garment, He could say at last to His Father : I have left nought undone that

¹ Luke, II. 45.

² *Quicumque enim fecerit voluntatem Patris mei qui in coelis est, ipse meus frater, et soror, et mater est.* — Matt. XII. 50.

³ *Tunc dixi : Ecce venio, ut faciam, Deus, voluntatem tuam.* — Hebr. X. 9.

could repair the insult offered to Thy infinite holiness : my work is completed : I give up my spirit in peace : « *Consummatum est* ». Before leaving earth, however, he would continue to keep His memory alive among men. And how did He do so ? He instituted a sacrificial rite in which His sacred body would appear in a mystical manner to undergo death, « *Hoc est corpus meum quod pro vobis tradetur* », in which His blood would be mystically shed upon the altar for the remission of sins, « *Hic est calix sanguinis mei qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum* ».

My dear brothers, do you recognize in Him your model ? Is it after this pattern that you conceive and shape your priesthood ? « Behold we have left all things, » said the Apostles to Jesus, « and have followed thee » ¹. Even from simple christians, from the ordinary faithful, Christ expects detachment. To be happy, He tells them, they must have the spirit of poverty, they must be clean of heart, they must weep for their sins and suffer persecution for justice' sake. ² How then can we presume to preach detachment and self-sacrifice to others unless we practise it our-

¹ *Ecce nos reliquimus omnia et secuti sumus te.* — Matt. XIX. 27.

² *Beati pauperes spiritu, Beati mundo corde, Beati qui lugent, Beati qui persecutionem patiuntur.* — Matt. V. 1-10.

selves ? The world has perhaps never hungered and thirsted as it does in our days after wealth, amusements, pleasures, comfort, enjoyment. Can it well dispense with the antidote and stimulus of our good example ?

Divine Providence has released us from the anxiety of providing for our own subsistence : is it for ourselves, or rather for the benefit of others, that such release is granted us ? At first the Apostles were obliged to live by their labour, but as soon as it became feasible they delegated the care of those temporal concerns to the deacons, while they themselves, faithful to their vocation, attended exclusively to prayer and preaching : « We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word » ¹. Why did we solemnly promise to observe celibacy all our lives, if it were not to insure that our hearts be not given to any creature, nor our minds absorbed and our time taken up by the care and anxieties of providing for a family ?

It is incumbent on us, my dear brothers, to bear well in mind those undertakings. Let me recall the exhortation of St. Paul to Timothy : « Neglect not the grace that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with imposition of

¹ *Nos vero orationi et ministerio Verbi instantes erimus*
Acts, VI. 4.

the hands of the priesthood ¹. Like the great apostle I thank God for turning my thoughts towards you day and night in my prayers. Knowing your difficulties as I do, I feel naturally drawn towards you and always I rejoice to converse with you ². It would be superfluous to say that your faith is sincere : it has been handed down to you for generations in your families, and I have every reason to believe that it is a living force within you ; but I warn you that you must be watchful to keep alive the grace God gave you through the imposition of the hands of your bishop. The gift we have received from God is no feeble breath, but a spirit of power, of love, of prudence : « Calling to mind that faith which is in thee unfeigned, which also dwelt first in thy grand-mother Loïs, and in thy mother Eunice, and I am certain that in thee also. For which cause I admonish thee that thou stir up the grace of God, which is in thee by the imposition of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear : but of power, and of love and of sobriety ³. »

¹ *Noli negligere gratiam quae in te est, quae data est tibi per prophetiam cum impositione manuum presbyterii.* I. Tim. IV. 14.

² *Gratias ago Deo... quod sine intermissione habeam tuam memoriam in orationibus meis nocte ac die, desiderans te videre, memor lacrymarum tuarum, ut gaudeo implear.* — II. Tim. I. 3, 4.

³ *Recordationem accipiens ejus fidei quae est in te non*

II.

The Priest's Mission is to Offer Sacrifice and Praise to God.

Such then, in reality, my dear brothers, is the priesthood : the state of men who by their vocation are given over to God, consecrated wholly and exclusively to His service. There are, no doubt, in our convents and monasteries, and even in the outside world, souls who have devoted themselves wholly to God, who have sealed their contract by vows of religion ; but the ministers of the altar have alone received with the sacrament of Holy Orders that sacred impress which makes them official representatives of the Eternal Father. To them alone He delegates that ministerial authority ¹ which empowers them, as distinct from all the rest of the faithful, to discharge sacerdotal functions. When a bishop

ficta, quae et habitavit primum in avia tua Loide et matre tua Eunice, certus sum autem quod et in te. Propter quam causam admoneo te, ut resuscites gratiam Dei, quae est in te per impositionem manuum mearum. Non enim dedit nobis Deus spiritum timoris, sed virtutis et dilectionis et sobrietatis. — ibid. 5-7.

¹ Et Thomas says that the *Character* of Orders endows the recipient with a real and inalienable power that fits him for the ministry of the altar : « *Per quemlibet ordinem aliquis constituitur supra plebem in aliquo gradu potestatis* », *Summ. Theol.* suppl., q. 35, art. 2.

consecrates a church the entire fabric is destined for prayer and becomes the vestibule of Paradise ; « *Hic domus Dei est et porta coeli* » ; but while the faithful occupy the nave and aisles the clergy alone have access to the sanctuary ; the inferior clergy occupy the lower steps of the altar ; the priest alone occupies the centre of the predella, face to face with the God-Man crucified, who is the source, the channel and the end of sacrifice and prayer . Baptism admits all the faithful into the Church of God, and St. Peter even says that the assembly of the christians constitutes « a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation ² » ; but the christian layman immolates only his own soul, and for his personal sanctification, whereas the priest is officially ordained to offer to God the Divine Victim of our altars in the name of the whole community.

Oh ! my dear brothers, how far these sublime truths carry us beyond and above the low, commonplace, petty conception of our calling, which alas ! we sometimes entertain : when, neglecting the practice of prayer which would raise our souls on high, we sadly sink to the mere natural level of the *professions* that surround us ;

¹ *Ex quo et per quem et in quo (in quem) sunt omnia.*

² *Vos autem genus electum, regale sacerdotium, gens sancta.* — I. Peter, II. 9.

and when, lowering our lives to the level of theirs, we gradually fall into their routine, imbibe their petty prejudices and become entangled in worldly cares, if not even ensnared in passions and pursuits similar to theirs.

Take a firm hold of this plain principle : No man acts reasonably who acts without a motive. Apply it to your own lives. You have, of your own free will, removed completely from your lives all motives of self-interest and domestic cares. Some spring of action must take their place : for you it must be that of charity and zeal ; if these be absent your lives will inevitably be a barren waste, ruined and lost by idleness and indolence. To nourish the springs of supernatural action is the very object of the interior life. And of this life prayer is the indispensable nourishment and mortification of the senses the necessary safeguard. Nor will you find, I believe, in the liturgy of the Mass and the Office any prayer so frequently repeated as that by which, in a thousand different forms, we ask of God the gift of a mortified body that we may the more easily and effectively attain to the things of Heaven : « *Ut carne mortificati facilius coelestia capiamus* ».

But, furthermore, my dear brothers, it is not enough to raise ourselves up by prayer and penance to supernatural thoughts and actions ;

the works of our public ministry must also be elevated and supernaturalized by religion. It is rather a common thing now-a-days, among those who try to organize what is good and healthy in society, to see in religion only an instrument of moralization, an aid to moral progress. Some time ago, in the days of Jules Simon, the « liberal » attitude of rationalist philosophers allowed indeed that it was right and proper for man to adore God, to offer Him disinterested worship ; but the prayer of petition it disapproved of as being incompatible with the idea we should have of the tranquil, exalted majesty of a sovereign and immutable Divinity ¹.

At the present day Protestantism and Modernism tend more and more to pull down the ideal of the interior, religious life to a merely moral level ² : to believe them it would almost seem as if God Himself and the worship due to Him were really only means of elevating the wills of well-disposed men above the selfish impulses of their lower passions. Ah, my dear brothers, not so, not so : God is the supreme Good ; and to Him can Jesus Christ alone securely lead us : « Now this is eternal life : That they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom

¹ JULES SIMON, *La religion naturelle*, 4^me Partie, Chap. I.

² Compare G. TYRELL, *External Religion*, Lect. IV.

thou hast sent » ¹. Man must not aim at serving God as a means to becoming morally good ; he must rather practise moral virtue as a means to *the love of God for His own sake*. The first of all the commandments, the eternal commandment, is that formulated in Deuteronomy in these words : Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength ². »

That precept the New Testament has repeated, emphasized and fully developed, by adding that the second commandment, which has our neighbour for its object, does not differ essentially from the first : « And the second is like to this : Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself ³ » So that the law of the love of God, understood in its proper amplitude, sums up in itself alone all the precepts, and all the counsels of the whole moral and religious life : « On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets » ⁴.

¹ *Haec est autem vita aeterna ut cognoscant te solum Deum verum et quem misisti Jesum Christum.* — John, XVII. 3.

² *Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et ex tota anima tua et ex tota fortitudine tua.* — Deut. VI. 5.

³ *Secundum autem simile est huic : diliges proximum tuum sicut teipsum.* — Matt. XXII. 39.

⁴ *In his duobus mandatis universa lex pendet et prophetae.* ibid. 40.

I beseech you, dearest brothers, to regard your holy vocation from the highest possible standpoint — which is the only true one — and in all the amplitude of its grandeur. To love God, to love Him above all things, to have no other object in life but to grow in the love of Him and to win others to the love of Him : such is the primary object of our priestly mission. Sometimes priests privately approach me with requests of this kind : « Give me, » they ask, « a place where I shall have more to do ; I have only eight or nine hundred souls in my parish ; from Sunday evening till Saturday morning I scarcely know what to do with myself. You will perhaps say, — they sometimes add, — that I might turn to study ; but then when one is isolated study has but few attractions, one requires such strong will to persevere at it when one is not sustained by having around him those who will appreciate his society and be glad to share in the labours and fruits of his research. And a country priest is, nearly always, isolated intellectually in his parish » ! — Now I sympathize with this attitude and I admit that there is ground for it. I respect the energetic zeal that seeks a wider field of action. I fully realize the difficulty of solitary study ; I recognize that it requires exceptional strength of will to undertake, and especially to carry through, such sort of intellectual

work as is not of obligation at the time : work which may be deferred or even abandoned altogether without incurring grave neglect of any clearly-defined duty of the ministry. Yet how easy it is to answer those priests who complain of having nothing to do ! How many works and plans and projects there are — intellectual, moral, social — which need their active guidance, or even call imperatively for their co-operation and control ! But there is a still deeper and more telling answer to make ; and if at times I shrink from giving it, I do so partly from a natural reluctance to enjoin on others what I know I do not sufficiently practise myself, and partly also through reverence for those secret appeals which must come to all of you at times, not through any channel of weak human speech, but from the mysterious action of the Holy Spirit in your own innermost hearts. Dear brothers, -- I will venture to say it here, -- the real answer to give these ardent natures that complain because they cannot do more for the salvation of souls, would be simply this : they misunderstand the first and chief function of their priestly mission ! It is not the multiplication of good works, nor their prosecution under all sorts of forms, that is essential to the priesthood. Faith without works is a dead faith, the Holy Scripture says ; but it is equally true, and there is need to emphasize

it in our days, that works without faith are also dead works. The priest who even in the lowliest sphere of action grows in the love of God, and, inspired by this growing love, performs faithfully such work as his position entails — such a priest is fulfilling to perfection the primary obligation of his priesthood. Not only is he sanctifying himself, like every christian who grows in charity, but he is eminently a *sanctifier*, a saver of souls. The progress of the Church is not measured by the distance her apostles travel, nor by the stir created by their words, nor by the fame of their missionary labours : « All the glory of the king's daughter is within » ¹ ; and it is for God alone to determine when, and where, and how far, the effects of grace will be manifested to the eyes of men.

Sooner or later, no doubt, the power of the invisible reality will be strikingly revealed. Think of the holy Curé of Ars. He worked wonders ; France, and indeed the whole civilized world, admire and are edified ; his memory will be an inspiration to priests for all time. Yet, how small, apparently, were *his* opportunities ! He had a poor parish of a few hundred souls ; his natural ability was below the average ; his speech was halting ; he had no gift of eloquence ; he was

¹ *Omnis gloria ejus filiae regis ab intus.* — Ps. XLIV. 14.

poor ; he commanded none of those great sources of influence — the power of the press, of large capital, of politics, science, art — forces which naturally make a stir in human society. But he was *holy* : his life was a practical and perfect fulfilment of all the engagements he had undertaken on receiving the priesthood. And so the mysterious contagion of his virtue was felt by all around him ; innumerable sinners were converted ; the good were made better ; and an incalculable number of souls received from him an abiding stimulus and support for their aspirations towards perfection.

Oh ! my dear Brothers, how supremely important it is for us to anchor ourselves on this fundamental truth, to cling to it, to live by it ! I may not mention names, nor touch the delicate and saintly sensitiveness of a virtue that seeks to live unnoticed ; but if I *might* speak, I could point to an example among ourselves of a truly priestly life, — of one who, without any outward show of good works, but simply because his life is extraordinarily holy, is re-converting and regenerating a whole parish, and awakening it from a deep sleep of religious indifference into which it had fallen. Be not surprised at this : it is but the plan of the Crucified ; He has no other. « Where is the wise ? Where is the scribe ? Where the disputer

of this world ? » cries out St. Paul, in his inspired address to the Corinthians ¹, » « hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world ?... But we preach Christ crucified... For see your vocation, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble : but the foolish things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the wise : and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that he may confound the strong : and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought things that are. That no flesh should glory in his sight ».

We shall be true ambassadors of one Master only when we have Him present always in ourselves and when we thus make Him present, in our own person, to those with whom we have intercourse. Is not this condition implied in

¹ *Ubi sapiens, ubi scriba, ubi conquisitor hujus saeculi ? Nonne stultam fecit Deus sapientiam hujus mundi... Nos autem praedicamus Christum crucifixum. — Videte enim vocationem vestram, fratres, qui a non multi sapientes secundum carnem, non multi potentes, non multi nobiles, sed quae stulta sunt mundi elegit Deus, ut confundat sapientes, et infirma mundi elegit Deus, ut confundat fortia, et ignobilia mundi et contemptibilia elegit Deus, et ea quae non sunt ut ea quae sunt destrueret, ut non gloriatur omnis caro in conspectu ejus. — I. Cor. I. 20, 23, 26-29.*

the very words « ambassadors » and « imitators » ? It is not the dead letter of the Gospel in a printed book that will save the world ; neither is it any abstract doctrine incapable of stirring the depths of the human soul ; it is the living Gospel set forth in the lives of men, in the lives of christians, above all in the lives of those who by their sacred calling are the express representatives of Christ our Saviour.

Tell me now, my dear fellow-labourer, are you still tempted to regard your life as useless because it is a hidden one ? Have you not realized, for good and all, that, being consecrated to God by your vocation, your career, whatever it be and wherever it lie, will be holy in itself and sanctifying to others once your whole heart is lovingly devoted to God's service ? Such is the « devout » soul, in the first and highest acceptation of this word : the soul that is ever ready to spend itself for God. « Devotion » — or what we would perhaps call now-a-days « devotedness » — is, according to the definition of St. Thomas Aquinas, the generous resolve of the will to give itself up entirely to the service of God ¹. If there are many such devout souls in

¹ *Devotio est quidam voluntatis actus ad hoc quod homo prompte se tradat ad divinum obsequium — Summa theol. 2^a, 2^{ae}, q. q. 82, art. 3.*

the world, so much the better for the world ! If they are legion within cloister walls, again so much the better ! For in God's Church they are as it were the thermometer of Christian fervour. But the faithful, after all, should as a rule be only the auxiliaries of the priesthood : when St. Theresa was placing before her daughters the ideal of their holy vocation, she often reminded them that they were the coadjutors of apostolic men ¹. The one who is officially consecrated to God, the one who is therefore holy by his very profession is the *priest* ; and we, dear brothers, lose the spirit of our vocation in the measure in which we lose sight, in theory or in practice, of this fundamental truth.

We have two great means of keeping alive within us the spirit of our vocation : the Roman Pontifical points them out to us in these brief words : « It behoves the priest to offer sacrifice and praise » *Sacerdotem etenim oportet offerre et benedicere* ».

First, we have to offer the Holy Sacrifice. The bishop said to you on the day of your ordination : « Receive the power to offer sacrifice to God and to celebrate masses for the living and the dead, in the name of the Lord. — *Accipe potestatem offerre sacrificium Deo missasque celebrare tam pro vivis*

¹ *Chemin de la perfection*, Ch. I.

quam pro defunctis, in nomine Domini ». For this you have received the power of the Priesthood : « For I have received of the Lord », says St. Paul to the faithful of Corinth, « that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke, and said : Take ye and eat : this is my body which shall be delivered for you ; this do for the commemoration of me. In like manner also the chalice, after he had supped, saying : This chalice is the new testament in my blood : this do ye, as often as ye shall drink, for the commemoration of me. For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until he come ¹ ».

The sacrifice of the Mass, then, which the apostle announces in these words, presents again to our minds the passion and death of our Divine Saviour. How does it do so ? Theologians are

¹ *Ego enim accepi a Domino quod et tradidi vobis, quoniam Dominus Jesus, in qua nocte tradebatur, accepit panem et gratias agens fregit et dixit : Accipite et manducate ; hoc est corpus meum, quod pro vobis tradetur (τοῦτο μου ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν κλῶμενον), hoc facite in meam commemorationem. Similiter et calicem, postquam coenavit, dicens : Hic calix novum testamentum est in meo sanguine ; hoc facite, quotiescumque bibetis, in meam commemorationem. Quotiescumque enim manducabitis panem hunc et calicem bibetis, mortem Domini annuntiabitis, donec veniat. — I. Cor. XI. 23-26.*

not agreed, as you know, upon the exact interpretation to be put upon the sacrificial rite of the Mass. According to Cardinal Franzelin, adopting the interpretation of Cardinal de Lugo, the God-Man becomes a victim upon the altar inasmuch as He there reduces Himself, under the species of bread and wine, to a state of apparent helplessness, weakness, subjection to the power of the priest, nay, even to the power of the most miserable wretch who may dare sacrilegiously to insult Him. Such a sacramental state, does it not remind us of the infinite abasement of the Divine Word in His Incarnation, and may it not, as truly as the latter, be called an « annihilation » ? If destruction, immolation of the victim, is essential to sacrifice, surely, says De Lugo, the condition to which Our Lord Jesus Christ reduces Himself in the Eucharist realizes in an eminent degree the idea of sacrifice ¹.

Well, no one certainly would think of denying the mysterious abasement of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist. But

¹ *Putamus ergo intrinsecam sacrificiationis formam in eo esse, quod Christus magnus sacerdos per ministerium sacerdotum ejus nomine offerentium, corpus et sanguinem suum sub speciebus panis et vini constituit secundum quamdam sanctissimae suae humanitatis a functionibus et rationibus existendi connaturalibus exinanitionem ad statum cibi et potus.* FRANZELIN, *Tractatus de SS. Euchæ Sacramento et Sacrificio*, Thesis XVI.

does it constitute the sacrificial rite of which St. Paul speaks, which tradition has preserved and commented on, and which the Council of Trent officially sets forth ¹ ? We do not think so. If the abasement of the Eucharistic state formed the essence of the sacrifice, two consequences, scarcely in keeping with traditional Christian feeling, would follow : the sacrifice would be complete by the consecration of the bread alone ; and it would last as long as the sacramental species under which Jesus Christ is present are preserved. But theologians are unanimous in thinking that the two consecrations, that of the bread and that of the wine, are both by the divine law essential to the sacrifice of the Mass, and that when this twofold consecration is completed the sacrifice is accomplished ².

The interpretation we prefer seems closer to the text of St. Paul and to the teaching of the Council of Trent. To understand it aright we must remember that Christ since His Resurrection is impassible and immortal : as St. Paul says in his Epistle to the Romans, « Christ

¹ Conc. Trid. Sess. XXII, cap. I.

² *Sacramentum enim consecratione perficitur ; omnis vero sacrificii vis in eo est, ut offeratur. Quare sacra Eucharistia, dum in pyxide continetur, vel ad aegrotum deferitur, Sacramenti, non sacrificii rationem habet.* — Catech. Conc. Trid., Pars II. Sess. LXXVIII.

rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over him ¹ ». His death on the altar then cannot be effective, nor can His blood be effectively shed on the altar : and yet His death there is not merely apparent ; nor His immolation merely symbolic. The sacrifice is a true sacrifice, a real sacrifice, but a mystical one. ... What does that mean?...

The Offertory of the Mass gives us a symbol, and only a symbol, of the sacrifice : the bread whose substance will presently be changed into the substance of the body of Our Lord, is laid upon the paten ; the wine whose substance will be changed into the substance of the blood of Our Lord, is poured into the chalice ; and, furthermore, to recall the memory of the blood and water that flowed from the Sacred Heart of Jesus crucified, the priest mingles a drop of water with the wine. The offering of the bread separately from that of the wine mixed with water, is the manifest *symbol* of the separation of the body and the blood of Our Saviour, that is, of His real death. But a symbol is only a sign : whereas the sacrifice of the Mass is a real sacrifice.

Pass now from the Offertory to the Consecration.

¹ *Christus resurgens ex mortuis jam non moritur ; mors illi ultra non dominabitur.* — Rom. VI. 9.

While the priest, in the person of Jesus Christ, pronounces the word, « *Hoc est enim corpus meum* — This is my body », by virtue of these sacramental words the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, the body *alone*, becomes present. So also while the priest pronounces the second form of consecration over the wine, « *Hic est enim calix sanguinis mei* — For this is the chalice of my blood », through the efficacy of these sacramental words the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, the blood *alone*, becomes present. It is of the essence of a sacrament to operate what it signifies. Therefore the double form of consecration, by its immediate and direct efficiency, is calculated to produce on the altar on the one hand the bloodless body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and on the other His precious Blood, isolated from the Sacred Heart which is its natural source, and from the divine arteries through which it naturally flows to vivify that heart in the living body of the saviour. Now to effect in that way, by virtue of the mysterious efficacy of the twofold consecratory act, the separation of the body and the blood of our Lord is, of necessity, to secure the immolation, the destruction, that is essential to every sacrifice. No doubt the immolation is not consummated in fact, the destruction is not actually effected, and for this reason — which is extrinsic to the sacrament, — that the actual state of impassibility

and immortality of the risen Christ prevents these consequences of the sacrificial rite from actually taking place ; and it is precisely for this reason that Catholic tradition attests that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is neither a pure symbol on the one hand, nor an effective immolation with actual shedding of blood on the other, but a sacrifice which, for being mystical, is none the less a real sacrifice ¹.

Christ who reigns immortal in Heaven accepts this sacramental state which He has given us

¹ *Si quis dixerit in Missa non offerri Deo verum et proprium sacrificium, anathema sit.* — Conc. Trid. Sess. XXII, Canon I. The Catechism of the Council of Trent, speaking of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, uses this language : *Veruntamen nulla in re ejus (sacrificii) imaginem magis expressam licet videre, quam in Melchisedech sacrificio : ipse enim Salvator sacerdotem secundum ordinem Melchisedech se in aeternum constitutum declarans, corpus et sanguinem suum in extrema coena sub speciebus panis et vini Deo Patri obtulit. Unum itaque et idem sacrificium esse fatemur, et haberi debet, quod in Missa peragitur et quod in cruce oblatum est ; quemadmodum una est, et eadem hostia, Christus videlicet Dominus noster, qui seipsum in ara crucis semel tantummodo cruentum immolavit. Neque enim cruenta et incruenta hostia, duae sunt hostiae, sed una tantum ; cujus sacrificium, postquam Dominus ita praecepit « Hoc faciti in meam commemorationem » in Eucharistia quotidie instauratur.* — Catech. Conc. Trid. P. II ; §§ LXXXI-LXXXII. Cfr. VASQUEZ, P. III. Disp. 22 ; LESSIUS, *De Perfectionibus Divinis*, lib. XII. cap. XIII ; BOSSUET, *Méd. sur l'Évangile*, LVII^e jour ; HEDLEY, *The Holy Eucharist*, Ch. IX.

the power to produce, and while He thus submits Himself to the exercise of our priestly function He renews effectively in His Most Holy Soul the dispositions with which He accomplished for His Father's glory and our redemption the bloody sacrifice of Calvary. And God the Father infallibly accepts this ever-renewed oblation of His Well-Beloved Son ; and the communion, which is also by divine right an integral part of the Mass, is as the kiss of peace bestowed by the Divine Mercy on the repentant and forgiven sinner : it is the banquet given by the father to his children, the pledge of reconciliation for the past, of love for the present, and of love never-ending for the future if only we will it so.

My dear brothers, can you conceive a more efficacious or more suitable means for the priest to unite his own personal consecration with the consecration made by the God-Man to the sovereign dominion and glory of our Heavenly Father ? Every morning we bend our knee before the Host in the Divine Sacrifice, saying the words : *« As often as ye do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of me ¹ »*. Even then, though we may lose sight of God in the course of the day, through pressure of work and its distractions ;

¹ *Hæc quotiescumque feceritis in mei memoriam facietis.*

even though some days we should neglect prayer almost altogether ; there will be at least one moment, one brief moment at the dawn of each day, when the outer world vanishes, when even we in our own persons count for nothing, when as ministers of the altar, supernaturally identified with Jesus Christ, we say from our hearts to God : « This is my body, this is my blood, this is my life and I immolate it to Thee. Take possession of my soul, O my God ; it is Thine, Thine only, for time and for eternity. And in offering Thee my life, O my God, I mean not only the last moment of it when I pass from time to eternity : the martyr's crown is not likely to be mine, and I will not be content with the idle offering of an imaginary sacrifice : I offer Thee my *whole* life, all that I have and all that I am.

All nations have offered and still offer sacrifice : because this rite is the most powerful means at man's disposal for testifying to God, his Sovereign Lord, his feelings of homage and adoration. Eternally God is ; He alone is. There is nought besides Him but what He is pleased to preserve : « All things were made by Him : and without Him was made nothing » ¹. The acknowledge-

¹ *Omnia per Ipsum facta sunt et sine Ipso factum est nihil.*
— John, I, 3.

ment of this fundamental truth ; that God alone essentially is, that He alone exists by right, that every being outside Him has but borrowed existence and contingent life, — is the primary need and most pressing duty of every rational creature. Adoration satisfies this need and accomplishes this duty interiorly : and of interior adoration sacrifice is the outward expression. Impelled by this natural, religious need to worship, man takes some creature and withdraws it from its ordinary use : a lamb or a heifer ; he kills it ; he sheds its blood — even scatters abroad that blood ; — as if to say to Almighty God : « Master, all that is and all that lives is Thine before it is mine. It is just, good, and holy that I should deprive myself freely of the profit I could derive from this life which I sacrifice to Thee ; I forego the useful purpose for which I had intended it ; for Thou alone art Lord, Thou alone art God, Thou alone Supreme : *« Tu solus sanctus, tu solus dominus, tu solus altissimus ».*

To sacrifice « — *sacrum facere*, to render sacred » — is to withdraw something from its earthly use and devote it exclusively to God, to perform, therefore, the supreme act of religion. The priest, the minister of religion, is essentially a « sacrificer. » But his life will be in harmony

with his calling only if he himself is a « sacrificed », a « consecrated » being. I will therefore recall my sublime vocation every morning at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Church, admiring the life of that hero of charity, St. Vincent de Paul, points out for us the source at which he daily slaked the thirst of his great and ardent soul : in the mass which her liturgy has allotted to him for the dioceses of France she has inserted this prayer : « O God, who didst enable the blessed Vincent, by the daily celebration of the divine mysteries, to imitate what he offered ; grant to us through his prayers, that we also, by offering the immaculate host, may be transformed into a holocaust acceptable to Thyself ¹ ».

« Understand that which you are doing », the bishop said to me on the day of my ordination, « imitate that which you are handling ; so that celebrating the mystery of the death of the Lord, you may efficaciously mortify your members with their vices and concupiscences ² ». You

¹ *Deus, qui beato Vincentio, divina quotidie celebranti mysteria, tribuisti quod tractabat imitari : ejus nobis precibus indulge, ut immaculatam hostiam offerentes, ipsi quoque in holocaustum tibi acceptum transeamus.*

² *Agnoscite quod agitis, imitamini quod tractatis ; quatenus mortis dominicæ mysterium celebrantes, mortificare membra vestra a vitiis et concupiscentiis vestris procuretis.*

are possessed no doubt of some material goods ; love to detach yourselves from them ; love to practise poverty, if not after the fashion of that cultured and wealthy young man who became S. Francis of Assisi, then at least in spirit, so as to fulfil the wish of our Saviour and thus to secure His promise : « Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven ¹ ». — You have physical strength, you have an intellect, a will, a heart ; the current of your life is flowing in what we call time. All these things you only hold at the good pleasure of God : He alone is their owner ; you have vowed them to Him : do not try to take them back. If God were to ask you to sacrifice your life for the salvation of your flock, you would not refuse Him : « The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep ² ». Only understand your vocation, and the greatest sacrifice your ministry can ever demand of you will appear light compared with the fundamental obligation of your sacred calling.

I return, my dear Brothers, to the text of the Roman Pontifical : « *Sacerdotum etenim oportet offerre et benedicere* ». The first function of the priest is to offer sacrifice : the second is to *offer*

¹ *Beati pauperes spiritu quoniam ipsorum est regnum coelorum.* — Matt. V. 3.

² *Bonus pastor animam suam det pro ovibus suis.* — John. X. 11.

praise. At the altar you become the spokesman of the faithful and in union with them you say, « *Gloria in excelsis Deo* : Glory be to God in the highest,... we praise Thee ; we bless Thee ; we adore Thee ; we glorify Thee ; nothing is dearer to us than Thy glory, and we thank Thee for manifesting it to all » ¹. — And who indeed will praise God if not we ? Or who better than we can lend a voice to creation, interpret its wonderful harmony, and send aloft its music to the throne of God ? « All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord, praise and exalt him above all for ever. O ye heavens, bless the Lord.... O let the earth bless the Lord,... O ye sons of men, bless the Lord ... O let Israel bless the Lord... O ye priests of the Lord bless the Lord » ²... Who is more strictly bound than we are to fathom the truths of Faith and proclaim their priceless worth ? to answer the appeals of Hope ? to follow after the divine attractions of Charity ? Or who possesses as we do the lights and graces that sustain, and the leisure that enables us to fulfil,

¹ *Laudamus te ; benedicimus te ; adoramus te ; glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.*

² *Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino, laudate et superexaltate eum in saecula. Benedicite coeli Domino.... Benedicat terra Dominum.... Benedicite filii hominum Domino.... Benedicat Israel Dominum.... Benedicite sacerdotes Domini Domino....*
Dan. III.

all the duties of this beneficent ministry ?

Recall to mind the fact already referred to : how the apostles found it unbecoming to spend their time in temporal cares : « we shall give ourselves continually to prayer », they said, « and to the ministry of the word » ¹. We are the successors of the apostles : their mission is ours : we must be *men of prayer*. I will not dwell on this matter here ; you are entirely familiar with it ; and a few words, that will bear fruit from your careful reflection on them, will suffice for my purpose at present.

You must pray *in secret*, to keep alive in your hearts the spirit of prayer. With this subject of personal, private prayer I have dealt elsewhere ; and I take the liberty of referring you to what I have said upon it ².

But you have also to pray *publicly*, in the name of the church. St Ambrose, in a magnificent preface to his commentary on twelve psalms, very truly says that « The recitation or chanting of the psalms is the prayer of the faithful and their praise of God ; it is the worship of the multitude and their general acclaim ; it is the

¹ *Nos autem orationi et ministerio Verbi instantes erimus.* — Acts, VI. 4.

² Cf. Cardinal Mercier's *Conferences to his Seminarists*, 5th Conference, pp. 86 and following. Washbourne. London.

language of all, the voice of the whole Church¹. It is not individuals alone who are bound to praise and bless God. Societies too, whether natural or free — the family, the city, the parish, the state, — have obligations towards God. Society receives all its benefits from Him. He it is who has formed the links that hold it together ; His Providence it is that preserves it from dissolution, directs its progress, rewards its efforts, checks its wanderings and punishes its transgressions with a fatherly hand. — Now, the priest is the man chosen by God to represent society. The priest of the New Testament, acting in the name of Jesus Christ, is the religious representative of christian society before God. When he recites the canonical hours it not for himself alone that he prays. In union with all his brethren in holy orders he appropriates from the inspired writings, especially the psalms, and from the hymns and lessons composed by the supreme authority of the Church, the expression of the most sublime sentiments that fill the loving and just and merciful Heart of our Saviour Jesus Christ : the ever-living head of that body which is the Church. The priest, therefore, prays in the

¹ *Psalmus enim benedictio populi est, Dei laus, plebis laudatio, plausus omnium, sermo universarum, vox Ecclesiae.* S. Ambrosius, *Enarrationes in XII. Psalmos*, Praefatio, n. 9.

place of Jesus Christ ; he prays with Jesus Christ ; he prays according to the express desire of Jesus Christ ; and it is to Jesus Christ finally that he offers all his worship, so that by Him it may be made worthy to be offered before the throne of God : « *Domine, in unione illius divinae intentionis qua ipse terris laudes Deo persolvisti, has TIBI horas persolvo* ».

My dear brothers, we do not fully realize the vast extent of our powers ; or at least our faith in them is not a lively faith. The masses of the christian people, following the dictates of their hearts with childlike and unerring simplicity, have almost unlimited faith in the blessing of a priest. And they are right. When the bishop poured the holy oil on our hands he asked God to consecrate and sanctify them : « Deign, O Lord, to consecrate and sanctify these hands through this anointing and our benediction »¹.

Would that we treated our breviary with the respect our holy calling demands ! Is it not a strange mistake to attach more importance to forms of private devotion than to the inspired prayers that put us into communion with the soul

¹ *Consecrare et sanctificare digneris, Domine, manus istas per istam unctionem et nostram benedictionem ; ut quaecumque benedixerint, benedicantur, et quaecumque consecraverint, consecrentur et sanctificentur in nomine Domini nostri Jesu Christi. Amen.*

of Jesus Christ, so holy, so pure, so generous, so apostolic ? Why are we so reluctant to give to the recitation of the breviary the ten or fifteen minutes more that would make it a heartfelt, inspiring, instructive prayer ? Why offer in its place a hasty rush of hollow sounds that embody no living thought, express no feeling of the heart, and offer no purpose of the will to Almighty God ? Shall we have peace on our bed of death when we look back over the twenty, forty, fifty years of our ministry and ask ourselves — too late, alas ! — how many of these hours, spent in the recitation of the Office, were for us in the full, religious sense of the word, hours of *prayer and praise* ? « *Sacerdotem etenim oportet benedicere* ».

I asked you just now to make a first practical resolution : to renew every morning, at the moment of consecration, your resolve to devote your priestly life to God wholly and exclusively, after the example of the Divine Victim of Calvary and of our altars, and in union with His sacrifice. I now propose to you this other resolution : never to begin any part of your Office without secretly calling to mind for Whom, and in Whose Name, you are going to pray ; and never to commence Matins without either kneeling or standing while you recite with a special effort of attention the *Venite exultemus*, that psalm which

recalls, in language so sublime for those who realize it, the sovereign right of the Divine Majesty to the public worship of His creatures. Even with all these precautions numerous distractions will still, no doubt, crowd in upon us during the recital of prayers, so many of which are repeated word for word every day ; but at all events our hearts will pray with reverence, attention and devotion, *digne, attente ac devote*.

CONCLUSION.

Not long ago a venerable priest, to whom many of his brothers in the ministry entrust their private confidences, made a remark to me that struck me very forcibly by its truth and its aptness. « Priests », he said, « sometimes fall and often waver, because they do not live sufficiently *in their priesthood* ». Think what that means — to live « *in their priesthood* » ! Look at those business men, merchants, manufacturers, financiers, whom you see so busy all around you. Listen to their ordinary conversations. On what are their thoughts set ? What is the subject of their daily cares ? Why are they now gloomy, now anxious, now glad ? It is because they have some project at heart ; and nothing can take their thoughts away from it, not for a moment ! Or did you ever watch closely the

assiduity of the student who is possessed of the true spirit of scientific inquiry. He knows only his laboratory : there he spends his days. He is testing a theory ; he keeps at it ; he questions nature ; he repeats his observations ; he multiplies and varies his experiments : partial success neither satisfies nor misleads him ; nor does a momentary failure discourage him. Armed with new means and more perfect methods he will begin again, ten times, aye a hundred times over, until at last he is in triumphant possession of the hidden fact for the discovery of which he had undertaken his long, laborious researches. Or again, have you ever devined the emotions of an artist's soul ? How he is obsessed and haunted by the ideal he has conceived, and which he strives so hard to breathe into the lifeless marble ! Of the whole outside world with its vicissitudes, its politics, interests and anxieties, often even of its necessities and positive laws, he seems to lose sight completely, so insignificant does he deem all that compared with the inner ideal on which he has concentrated his whole soul.

Yet the passion for worldly wealth, or science, or art, will sometimes lead the heart of man astray ; for no ideal, God alone excepted, is or ever can be an exclusive and supreme end of human aspirations. But can we, dear brothers,

who by our vocation and state belong to God and to Him alone, can we go too far in following Him, or spend ourselves too much in serving Him? Henceforth we shall all, I trust, recall to mind every morning, before the consecrated Host and the most precious Blood, the remembrance of all we have bound ourselves to do for our Divine Master. The celebration of the Holy Mysteries will be for us a daily renewal of the consecration of our lives to God's service: we shall be following therein the example of St. Alphonsus Liguori who never said Mass without offering himself as a victim to the Lord: « O Lord Jesus Christ, inflame our hearts with the fire of sacrifice for an odour of sweetness, *who didst grant to Blessed Alphonsus Maria to celebrate these mysteries, and by the same to offer himself as a host to Thee* » ¹. And the invitatory of Matins — « Let us adore the Lord who hath made us... the King... the Lord, come let us adore » ² — will remind us expressly every day of our obligation to regard Almighty God as the King and Lord whose subjects and servants we are.

But these are only religious *acts*, and our vocation requires of us a religious *state*: that is

¹ « ...qui beato Alphonso Mariæ tribuisti et hæc mysteria celebrare et per eadem hostiam tibi sanctam seipsum exhibere ».

² *Adoremus Dominum, qui fecit nos... Regem... Dominum venite adoremus.*

to say, an habitual disposition of the soul whereby we shall be ready always and everywhere, no matter what be our occupation, at home or abroad, at the altar or at table, alone or in company, to turn the act of the present moment into a formal act of religion. Each created species of things is an outward expression of Eternal wisdom and Divine Love. The Priest is by state a manifestation of God's holiness, a manifestation which his life must ever render more and more luminous. In the clearness of their faith our people discern in us, behind the veil of our earthly existence and surroundings, the character of ministers of the living God. The Apostle St. Paul recommends them so to regard us : » Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God ' ». Saint Francis of Assisi, who all his life shrank from the honour of the priesthood, used to say : « Respect and honour the priests of God, for they are raised in dignity above all men. They are the spiritual fathers of the christian people, the spirit and life of the world. As for me, if I were to meet on the road a priest and an angel I would at once go forward to the priest to kiss his hand, and

¹ *Sic nos existimet homo ut ministros Christi et dispensatores mysteriorum Dei.* — I. Cor. IV. 1.

I would say to the angel : Wait, O angel, for those hands touch the Word of God and possess a power that is more than human ¹ ». The people have faith in our blessing ; I was told lately by the pastor of a parish in Newfoundland that his sick parishioners call him to their bedside not only for his prayers and ministrations, but even merely to kiss his consecrated hands.

Must we not confess, my dear brothers, that we ourselves are often the slowest to believe in the efficacy of our priesthood ? Recall to mind these words of the liturgy, which we recently repeated for our dear Seminarists : « All-powerful and merciful God, the grace Thou hast given to Thy priests is so great, it surpasses so immensely that which Thou hast given to the faithful, that every act of theirs appears as one of Thine own, if only it be accomplished worthily and in Thy Name : we invoke Thy infinite clemency and implore Thee to bless whatever we bless ; how unworthy soever we may be in ourselves, grant that wherever we go, the Saints of heaven helping, we may put to flight the evil spirit and open the way to the angel of peace. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen ² ». Let us then have

¹ *Œuvres de S. François d'Assise*, Berthaudier, (*Oracles et sentences*, no. XXII), Paris, 1863.

² *Omnipotens et misericors Deus, qui sacerdotibus suis tantam prae caeteris gratiam contulisti, ut quidquid in tuo nomine digne*

confidence in our priesthood ; let us live in it ; let us elevate our thoughts ; let us purify our hearts and desires and stimulate our zeal ; let us brace ourselves for labour, patience, persevering prayer and sacrifice, engraving this motto deeply on the consecrated temple of our soul : « *Tu es sacerdos in aeternum.* — Thou art a priest for ever ¹ ».

The Church makes us repeat every morning at the foot of the altar a psalm that should recall to us both the exalted requirements of our holy vocation, the carelessness into which it is possible for us to drift in the discharge of our duties, and also the means of renewing our courage by reposing in the goodness of God a firmer hope of perseverance and fidelity. The verses of the *Judica me, Deus* are the conclusion of the psalm *Quemadmodum desiderat cervus*, in which the psalmist, exiled from the house of God, expresses his ardent and trustful desire to see it once more, to find rest in it from the tribulations that afflict him, and to live there again in joyful

perfecteque ab eis agitur a te fieri credatur ; quaesumus immensam clementiam tuam, ut quidquid benedicturi sumus, benedicas ; sitque ad nostrae humilitatis introitum, sanctorum tuorum meritis, fuga daemonum, angeli pacis ingressus. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

¹ Ps. CIX. 14).

union with his God ¹. Withdrawn by his occupations from the sanctuary, feeling that he is much immersed in that world for the sanctification of which he is labouring, the priest upbraids and reproaches himself for not keeping closer to his God; and in the presence of his Judge he gives vent to the bitterness of his soul: Turn Thy gaze on my soul, O my God, and read in its depths whether I have not, with the better part of my being, clung faithfully to my holy vocation. From my youth I have kept aloof from the world and I strive to avoid its treacherous snares; for I know, O my God, that with Thee alone as my

¹ The Psalms 41 to 48 of the Latin Psalter all seem to belong to the time of Ezechias and the invasion of Sennacherib. The two psalms 41 and 42, *Quemadmodum* desiderat cervus... and *Judica* me Deus... are really only one. The psalmist, forced by the invading armies to flee from the Temple and hide beyond the Jordan in the mountains of Hermon, is mourning over his exile. He first pours out his heart in painful longings and then conceives the steadfast hope that a day will come when he will once more see the temple of the Lord. In a spiritual sense he gives expression to the yearnings of man, exiled by sin from God and heaven, sighing for the promised Redeemer. On the lips of the priest the psalm is intended to reveal the fervour of a soul that grieves to see its intercourse with God impeded by the preoccupations and pitfalls of a profane and perverse world, and it embodies a confident appeal of the soul for light and power from on high, to keep it more entirely and faithfully attached to its God.

refuge shall I find peace. — *Judica me, Deus, et discerne causam meam de gente non sancta, ab homine iniquo et doloso erue me ; quia [nam] tu es Deus, fortitudo mea [refugii mei.]* — Behold I have to ask Thee, O my God, why hast Thou cut me off, and why have I to struggle sorrowfully along the path of life beaten and buffeted by the enemy — *Quare me repulisti et quare tristis incedo dum affligit me inimicus?* — But I have erred by not seeing through meditation the light of Thy divine teaching. Send forth Thy light and Thy truth that they may guide and conduct me along the height of Thy holy mount, and lead me into Thy tabernacles — *Emitte lucem tuam et veritatem tuam : ipsa me deduxerunt et adduxerunt (ipsae me ducent et introducent) in montem sanctum tuum et in tabernacula tua.* — And I will go up again to the altar of my God : I will go to God who filleth my heart with joy. And then, O God, my God, I will confess and sing thy praises. — *Et introibo ad altare Dei, ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam (ad Deum laetitiae exultationis meae).* *Confitebor tibi in cithara Deus, Deus meus.* — Why then art thou sorrowful, O my soul ? and why dost thou disquiet me ? Put thy hope in God, for I will still give praise to Him, to Him whom I know to be my Saviour and my God. — *Quare tristis es, anima mea et quare conturbas me ? Spera in Deo quoniam adhuc confitebor illi, salutare vultus mei et*

Deus meus. — Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost ; glory to the ever-Blessed Trinity ; as it was in the beginning, so now, and so may it be for endless ages. Amen. — *Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto ; Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.*

EIGHTH DISCOURSE.

I. The Mission of the Priest as God's
Ambassador to Man.

- I. — Duties of the Pastoral Ministry.
II. — Conditions for Success in the Pastoral
ministry.
-

EIGHTH DISCOURSE.

The Mission of the Priest as God's Ambassador to Man.

*Sacerdotem etenim oportet
offerre benedicere, praeesse,
praedicare et baptizare.*

« The Priest's mission is
to offer sacrifice and praise
to God, to bless, to govern,
to preach and to baptize »
Roman Pontifical.

When the angels were sent to announce to man that a saviour was born to him, their choirs were heard singing a canticle of divine praise : « Glory to God in the highest : and on earth peace to men of good will. ¹ ». During the whole course of His mortal life our Saviour never deviated from this sublime mission. From the crib to the cross there was not a single instant in which He did not fulfil His own declaration that always and in all things He

¹ *Gloria in altissimis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.* — Luke, II. 14.

would do His Father's will : « for I do always the things that please Him ; ¹ » not a moment in which He did not justify those Gospel words that sum up so faithfully His whole life-history : that He « went about doing good, and healing all the ills of poor human society. » ² As priests we have undertaken the mission of carrying out the twofold task assumed by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made man for the salvation of the world.

In a preceding discourse we saw how we should glorify God in the entire consecration of our lives to His service ; and especially by the holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the practice of Prayer : which later St. Benedict used to call the « divine work, » the « *opus Dei* » *par excellence*. To-day we shall consider the second part of our mission : how we shall discharge the function of continuing Christ's perpetual ministry of beneficence among our fellow-men : « For Christ therefore we are ambassadors — *Pro Christo ergo legatione fungimur* ³.

The Roman pontifical summing up our functions says : « The priest is to offer sacrifice and praise, to govern, to preach and to baptize. »

¹ *Quia ego quae placita sunt ei, facio semper.* — John, VIII. 29.

² *Pertransiuit benefaciendo et sanando omnes.* Acts, X. 38.

³ II. Cor. V. 20.

The offering of sacrifice and praise concerns our ministry towards God ; the sacrifice of propitiation and impetration, the blessing we give to the faithful in the name of God, the guidance of souls in the way of salvation, the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments : these all concern our mission among men, our pastoral ministry in the true and proper meaning of the word. In the first part of this Discourse then, we will deal with these duties of the pastoral charge ; in the second we will outline the conditions necessary for the success of this charge.

In his Encyclical *E Supremi*, addressed to the world on his accession to the Pontificate, Pius X. addresses some very encouraging words to you, dear pastors and curates. The Head of the Church assuredly does not underrate science, religious or profane : none better than he can appreciate its influence over men in our day. Nevertheless, pastors of souls, it is your ministry of charity that he places in the front rank of importance. « We will not deny, rather we openly profess, that we will always give the palm of honour to those who, while not neglecting letters, sacred and profane, nevertheless devote themselves before all else to the service of souls by acquiring all those gifts and qualities which become the priest that is zealous of God's

glory ¹ ». Does not your daily experience lead you to share the views of the august Pontiff on the importance of your mission in society ? And do you not see, as he does, that the destiny of the parish is in your hands ? The late Monsignor Cartuyvels, Vice-Rector of the University of Louvain, used to measure the piety of the faithful by that of their pastors. « Give me a holy priest, » he would say, « and I will soon show you a fervent flock ; if his virtue is above the common level, his flock will be good ; if he is merely good his flock will be but lukewarm ; but when the pastor himself is only lukewarm, the souls that he should lead to holiness will be for the most part lax or indifferent ».

« Holy Father, keep them in thy name.... Sanctify them in truth ² ». My dear brothers, let us edify one another, let us pray for one another, that God may raise up saints among us to shew forth the sanctity of His Church. And you, pious christian souls, whom an echo

¹ « *Celare haud possumus, quin etiam apertissime profitemur, primas Nos semper delaturos iis, qui, quamvis sacras humanasque disciplinas minime praetercunt, proxime nihilosecius animorum utilitatibus se dedant, eorum procuratione munerum, quae sacerdotem deceant divinae gloriae studiosum.* »

² *Pater sancte, serva eos in nomine tuo... sanctifica eos in veritate.* — John, XVII, 11, 17.

of these Pastoral Conferences may reach, entreat Almighty God to give us holy priests : « Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth ¹ ».

I. — Duties of the Pastoral Ministry.

Before proceeding further, let us read together attentively, endeavouring to take in their full scope and meaning, these instructions of the Roman Pontifical, which were addressed to us on the day of our ordination to the priesthood :

« *Consecrandi, filii dilectissimi, in Presbyteratus officium, illud digne suscipere, ac susceptum laudabiliter exequi studeatis. Sacerdotem etenim oportet offerre, benedicere, praeesse, praedicare et baptizare. Cum magno quippe timore ad tantum gradum ascendendum est, ac providendum, ut coelestis sapientia, probi mores, et diuturna justitiae observatio ad id electos commendent. Unde Dominus praecipiens Moysi, ut septuaginta viros de universo Israel in adjutorium suum eligeret, quibus Spiritus Sancti dona divideret, suggessit : Quos tu nosti, quod senes populi sunt. Vos siquidem in septuaginta viris, et senibus signati estis ; si per Spiritum septiformem, Decalogum legis custodientes, probi et maturi in scientia similiter est opere eritis. Sub eodem quoque mysterio, et eadem figura in novo*

¹ *Emitte spiritum tuum et creabuntur, et renovabis faciem terrae.*

Testamento Dominus septuaginta duos elegit, ac binos ante se in praedicationem misit, ut doceret verbo simul et facto, ministros Ecclesiae suae, fide et opere debere esse perfectos, seu geminae dilectionis, Dei scilicet et proximi virtute fundatos. Tales itaque esse studeatis, ut in adjutorium Moysi et duodecim Apostolorum, Episcoporum videlicet catholicorum qui per Moysen, et Apostolos figurantur, digne, per gratiam Dei eligi valeatis. Hac certe mira varietate Ecclesia sancta circumdatur, ornatur et regitur ; cum alii in ea Pontifices, alii minoris ordinis Sacerdotes, Diaconi, et Subdiaconi, diversorum ordinum viri consecrantur ; et ex multis, et alternae dignitatis membris unum corpus Christi efficitur. Itaque, filii dilectissimi, quos ad nostrum adjutorium, fratrum nostrorum arbitrium consecrandos elegit, servate, in moribus vestris, castae et sanctae vitae integritatem. Agnoscite quod agitis ; imitamini quod tractatis, quatenus mortis Dominicae mysterium celebrantes, mortificare membra vestra a vitiis et concupiscentiis omnibus procuretis. Sit doctrina vestra spiritualis medicina populo Dei ; sit odor vitae delectamentum Ecclesiae Christi ; ut praedicatione, atque exemplo aedificetis domum, id est, familiam Dei, quatenus nec nos de vestra profectione, nec vos de tanti officii susceptione damnari a Domino, sed remunerari potius mereamur. Quod ipse nobis concedat per gratiam suam. Amen.

You have it all there : your sacerdotal functions are to offer sacrifice and praise to God, to bless

and govern the people, to preach and administer the sacraments to them.

Sacerdotem oportet offerre : it is the duty of the priest to offer sacrifice. The sacrificial rite, which is universal among men, is essentially a recognition of the dominion of the Supreme Being over His creation ; but it is also a ransom of our guilty souls. Hear what the liturgy of the Church teaches us : « as often as the remembrance of this Victim is celebrated, so often is the work of our redemption carried on » ¹. The Levitical ritual recognized among the sacrifices of animals the holocaust, the peace-offering, the sacrifice for sin, and also sacrifices of impetration. The hymn *Gloria in excelsis* distinguishes clearly these four ends of the sacrifice of the Mass : praise and adoration, « *laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te* » ; thanksgiving, « *gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam* » ; expiation, « *qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis* » ; « *suscipe deprecationem nostram* ».

The Church imposes on the priest who is a pastor of souls the obligation of celebrating Mass for his flock on all Sundays and Holy-days. And yet do we not sometimes forget that even at the altar, indeed chiefly at the altar, we have by

¹ *Quoties hujus hostiae commemoratio celebratur, opus nostrae redemptionis exercetur.* — Dom. nona post Pentecost.

our very office the charge of our people's souls ? May I recall here a memory of my youth, from which a lesson, perhaps even a reproach may be drawn. The priests who guided my early steps in the spiritual life were certainly men of great merit and I can by no means forget the debt of gratitude I owe them. But the very halo of sanctity, with which they are surrounded in my memory makes it all the more surprising that never to my knowledge did they expressly ask us to unite with them on Sundays to offer the « people's Mass », the « *Missa pro populo*, » in atonement for our sins of the past week and to obtain fresh graces for the week to come. Have we not sometimes to reproach ourselves with a similar neglect ? For what a powerful means it is of uniting all our supplications — this solemn Mass offered by the pastor for his flock !

The Lord's day is a day of rejoicing for your people. Even the poorest among them put on what in simple joy they call their Sunday clothes. Labour in the fields has been stopped ; the factories are nearly all closed. The little children by their parents' side are hastening along the road to the church. In the humble sanctuaries of the poorest country churches carefully treasured vestments are produced for this day. And just as the workman, after his week of weary labour away from his home, will rest to-day with his

family and sit with them at his own table ; so the faithful pastor, who suffers oftentimes so deeply at feeling himself alone in his populous parish, will be found to-day in the confessional, at the altar, in the pulpit, surrounded by his beloved children ; longing to raise their thoughts and aspirations for a time above the pressing material concerns of their daily existence ; longing to make them forget, if possible, for a day, or even only for an hour, all their engrossing anxieties about the morrow. « *Sursum corda* » — « lift up your hearts on high, dear parishioners ! » you sing aloud to them. Oh why cannot they all sing in chorus » : *Habemus ad Dominum* -- we lift them up unto the Lord » !

My dear pastors and curates, some of you, I know, are surprised at the persistence with which I ask you to associate your flocks, by means of the plain chant, with the celebration of the Holy Mass. Believe me, I am not gratifying any mere pious whim that would lay a needless burden upon your shoulders. No ; in each of your parishes I see a small Communion of Saints ; and I ask myself : Is there anything more consoling than this beautiful Catholic dogma ? From the very beginning of Christianity we see those who were « called » organize themselves into societies, « churches », « *Εκκλησιαι* » and we hear St. Paul urging them to encourage one

mente, corde, praising, thanking, invoking and imploring God with voice and mind, and heart. Had you no other motive to determine you, the wish of our Holy Father, the Pope — to which with humble confidence I join my own — should be a sufficient motive. If only you set to work with all your will and all your heart, with courage, confidence and zeal, you will soon find by experience that this active participation of your people in the religious functions of your parish will draw them closer together, develop among them a living consciousness of the Communion of Saints, and establish a stronger bond of union between them and their pastors. This is an object worth struggling for. May it be achieved! *Fiat! Fiat!*

Sacerdotem oportet benedicere: it is the priest's duty to bless. I need not again recur to blessing considered as a form of praise and worship offered to God, nor to the importance of the pastors's prayers for the spiritual and temporal needs of his flock. You will easily apply to the recitation of the Office, to the Vespers and Benediction services in your churches, the recommendations I have just made about associating your flocks with you in the celebration of Mass and of all the public ceremonies. The « benediction » or « blessing » of which I have now to speak, is that which the priest is bound in the

Name of God to call down upon his people, that which Christ offered to all who suffer when He said: « Come to me, all you who labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you ¹. »

What suffering there is throughout the world, my dear friends! What a world of groans it is! Hearts broken under loads of sorrow, and bodies racked with pain! How many poor paralytics there are, lying by the Pool of Bethsaida, waiting for the angel to stir the water and for the friend to lower them into its healing wave! And it is you who, by virtue of your calling, are the appointed comforters of all those afflicted ones. You it is who must « say the good word » to them — « *dicere bene, benedicere* » ; who must lift up the fallen ; who must comfort and encourage the weak ones that faint under the weight of their cross.

The moral ills of our poor humanity are grievous indeed to reflect upon ; but they need not surprise us greatly. For we are the representatives of Jesus Christ, His work has become ours, and do we not know that the chief task for which our dear Lord came on earth was to save sinners : « For I came not to call the just

¹ *Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos.* — Matt. XI. 28.

but sinners » ¹ : « For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost » ². He tells us He is the physician, and for whom is the physician if not for them « that are ill » ³ ? » He is the Good Shepherd : so great His love for the sheep that have strayed from Him that to save even one of them He goes over the hills in search of it, leaving for the time the ninety-nine that have remained near Him : « What man of you that hath a hundred sheep : and if he shall lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost until he find it ⁴ ? » The early Christians, who inherited the spirit of Christ directly from Himself, had no dearer symbol than that of the Good Sepherd bearing the lost sheep upon His shoulders, or calling around Him, by His look and gesture, His faithful and beloved flock.

The nature of our pastoral duty, then, is unmistakable ; and indeed I know that you all regard it in its true light : for was it not zeal for the

¹ *Non enim veni vocare justos sed peccatores.* — Matt. IX. 13.

² *Venit enim Filius hominis quaerere et salvum facere quod perierat.* — Luke, XIX, 10.

³ *Non est opus valentibus medicus, sed male habentibus.* — Matt. IX, 12.

⁴ *Quis ex vobis homo, qui habet centum oves ; et si perdiderit unam ex illis, nonne dimittit nonaginta novem in deserto, et vadit ad illam quae perierat, donec inveniat ?* — Luke, XV. 4.

salvation of souls that decided your vocation to the priesthood ? And on receiving jurisdiction did you not consider yourselves as officially appointed to be savers of souls ? Therefore the joy of the angels in heaven over one sinner that repenteth will find an echo in your priestly hearts : every time you bring back a wandering sheep to the fold you will feel a happiness greater than that afforded you by your whole faithful flock : surely a blessed joy that is well worth every sacrifice. Pray, then, earnestly for your poor sinners ; say your office for them ; offer Masses for them ; make the Stations of the Cross for them ; pray to Mary, the refuge of sinners, for them ; fast for them and do penance for them, that you may obtain from the Divine Mercy their return to the fold ; for there are evil spirits that cannot be banished otherwise : « This kind can go out by nothing, but by prayer and fasting ¹ ».

Therefore, too, get holy souls to co-operate in your apostolate. As I reminded you the other day, St. Theresa used to say to her nuns that as long as they did not realize and live up to their rôle in the Church as auxiliaries to the bishops and Clergy in saving souls, they would fall short in the discharge of their duty. For what is the church

¹ *Hoc genus in nullo potest exire, nisi oratione et jejuniis.*
— Mark, IX. 28.

but the Spouse of Christ ? And does the spouse of Christ live up to her sublime state as long as she does not enter into the views of Christ and understand them, and labour lovingly to promote them with all her power ? In every one of your parishes there are some exemplary catholics ; the religious in your convents, the Christian-brothers, a school-master or school-mistress who understands his or her mission, a father or a mother, some young people, some pious children : do not hesitate to solicit their help. Inspire them with the catholic sentiment : the holy ambition to spread around them and communicate to the whole world, by their charity, by their prayers and their sacrifices, those blessings of Christian light and grace with which Providence has so plentifully enriched themselves : « I am come to cast fire on the earth ; and what will I but that it be kindled ¹. » Had I already one foot in Heaven », said the Curé of Ars one day to Brother Athanasius, « and were I told to return to earth and go on labouring for the conversion of sinners, I would willingly do so. And had I even to remain here till the end of the world, getting up every night at twelve o'clock, and suffering always as I suffer now, I would remain with all

¹ *Ignem veni mittere in terram et quid volo nisi ut accendatur ?* Luke, — XII. 49.

my heart. « St. Ignatius of Loyola would have preferred, as he often said, if God were to give him his choice, to prolong his life in the service of souls with all the risks to his own salvation, rather than die there and then, with the assurance of immediate admission to the joys of Heaven.

My dear brothers, it is only by loving sinners that we can draw them to Christ ; and to prove our love to them we must do them good. Surely it is not the opportunity of doing good that is wanting ? What pain and sorrow of every kind we see around us ! The afflicted poor ; unhappy marriages and disunited families ; people constantly seeking your advice, your recommendations, your influence ; the respectable poor who shrink from betraying their poverty ; the unemployed ; the misguided masses embittered by misfortune and at war with society ; the agonizing ; the households in tears and mourning : Great God ! what sufferings and sorrows there are « in this Valley of tears, » *in hac lacrymarum valle !* And to whom will all these afflicted souls turn in their hour of sorrow if not to you, my dear brothers ? It hardly occurs to people to make us sharers of their joys ; they seem to remember us only when sorrow weighs heavy upon them. In prosperity they can do without us ; only when they need our

help do they turn to us. But far be it from us to judge them severely for that : which of us does not act in the same way towards God Himself ? « In affliction we acknowledge our misdeeds ; after Thy visitation we forget what we deplored » ¹. Nay, rather rejoice that Providence should open to you the depths of the human soul through suffering, and enable you to pour into its wounds the kindly balm of your compassion. Be all things to all men. Let the world feel and admire the depth and persuasiveness of your charity. « Though the same charity is due to all, » says St. Augustine, « its medecine cannot be administered in the same way to all. It is in labour with some and in sickness with others ; it strives to edify some and avoids offending others ; it stoops down to some while it boldly faces others ; gentle to some, severe to others ; an enemy to none, a mother to all » ². Here then is the chief secret of charity in action : *sympathy*. « Who is weak, and I am not weak ? Who is scandaliz-

¹ *Confitemur in correctione quod egimus : obliviscimur post visitationem quod flevimus.* — Oratio ab Urbano VIII. Papa edita.)

² *Et quia cum eadem omnibus debeat caritas, non eodem modo est omnibus adhibenda medicina ; ipsa eadem caritas alios parturit, cum aliis infirmatur ; alios curat aedificare, alios contremiscit offendere ; ad alios se inclinatur, ad alios se erigit ; aliis blanda, aliis severa ; nulli inimica, omnibus mater.* S. Aug. *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, Cap. XV.)

ed, and I am not on fire ? ¹ » Very few among you are rich ; and even if you all were, your means would not suffice to assuage all the distress that appeals to your generous hearts. Still, however slender your resources, you can always add to them a kindly love, a sincere desire to help, a little word of encouragement, a look of compassion that none will mistake, a heartfelt regret at not being able to do more. When our Divine Master bids us all come to Him to be comforted in our sorrows He does not promise to lift the cross off our shoulders ; for elsewhere He tells us that the really happy, in the true meaning intended and inculcated by Himself, are those who weep : « And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple » ². « Whithersoever thou runnest, » says the *Imitation of Christ*, « thou canst not escape it.... turn thyself upward, or turn thyself downward ; turn thyself inward or turn thyself outward ; everywhere thou shalt find the cross » ³.

¹ *Quis infirmatur et ego non infirmor ; quis scandalizatur et ego non uror ? — II. Cor. XI. 29.*

² *Et qui non bajulat crucem suam et venit post me, non potest meus esse discipulus. — Luke, XIV, 27.*

³ *Non potes effugere, quocumque cucurreris... Converte te supra, converte te infra ; converte te extra ; converte te intra ; et in his omnibus invenies crucem. — Lib. II, cap. XII, 4.*

Those who promise to the faithful a paradise on earth are cruel and criminal deceivers. Let us, then, who hold the Gospel truth, who will not and cannot deceive any man, let us go to the destitute, to the unfortunate, and let us say to them, not like the charlatan : « I will take away your ills », but like Our Lord : « I will refresh you » ; not like the ambitious schemer : « I will help you on condition that you become my tool », but like St. Paul to those he assisted : « ¹ I am your debtor even while I do what I can for you. » You are in truth their debtors, my dear brothers, according to our Lord Himself the poor whose poverty it is your privilege now to relieve will one day be the powerful friends who will introduce you into the Kingdom of Heaven : « make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail they may receive you into everlasting dwellings » ².

At the same time you must not forget that charity is proved by deeds : « My little children : », says St. John, « let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and truth » ³

¹ *Gracis ac Barbaris, sapientibus et insipientibus debitor sum.* — Rom I. 14.

² *Facite vobis amicos de mammona iniquitatis, ut, cum defeceritis, recipiant vos in aeterna tabernacula.* — Luke, XVI, 9.

³ *Filioli mei, non diligamus verbo aut lingua sed opere et veritate.* — I. John, III. 18.

So let us be as generous as our means will permit. You are well aware that no failing is so fatal to the priest's power for good as even the bare suspicion of avarice : a failing which, thank God, is almost unheard of among our clergy. But liberality, like every other virtue, has its degrees ; and we may lay this down as universally true, that the confidence of the faithful in their pastor grows with every fresh proof of his charitableness. Even at the risk of wounding the susceptibility of a singularly modest soul, I will cite for your edification a case that illustrates my point : A certain parish in this diocese had long been sunk in indifference and is now a model of fervour. Its conversion began on the day when the parish priest, witnessing the ruin of a poor family by the burning of their home, and moved to pity by their misfortune, immediately presented them with all the furniture which he himself possessed. People feel the charity of Christ in such acts of generosity. And what, moreover, are the very first words of praise which the Church addresses to her priests on raising them to the altars : « Blessed is the man that is found without blemish ; and that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money nor in treasures. Who is he, and we will praise him ? for he hath done wonderful

things in his life.... and all the church of the saints shall declare his alms » ¹.

Sacerdotem oportet praeesse. The pastor is the guide of the christian people. It is his duty to lead them along the road to heaven. But each individual soul has its own good and bad qualities, natural or acquired ; and it is each and every one of those souls that the priest must enlighten, must encourage or reprimand, must lead from bad to good, from good to better, from better to perfect. He must achieve this by his preaching ; but above all by his example. How delicate and difficult a task it is ! What knowledge, virtue and prudence it requires ! The father is bound to watch over his children, the teacher over his pupils ; they must study the defects, and divine the intentions, and weigh the abilities, of the little ones entrusted to their charge : so as to make each yield fruit to the best advantage. The parish priest is the father and educator of each and every one of his parishioners. He is therefore bound to study them thoroughly ; each one apart, and every one in relation to the whole community. In the

¹ *Beatus vir, qui inventus est sine macula et qui post aurum non abiit, nec speravit in pecunia et thesauris. Quis est hic et laudabimus eum ? Fecit enim mirabilia in vita sua.... Eleemosynas illius enarrabit omnis ecclesia sanctorum. — Eccli. XXXI, 8-9, 11.*

parable of the Good Shepherd, the Divine Master would have the leader of his spiritual flocks know each of his sheep well enough to call it by name ¹, and to be able to detect at once whether any are missing : « and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out ². » And so the Church, directly inspired by these divine lessons, commands the priest of each parish to keep a register, the *Liber status animarum*, in which he must note down regularly the baptisms, first communions, confirmations, pascal communions, marriages and deaths ; and also, now-a-days, the attendance of the children at the school and catechism, of the young people at the parochial clubs and sodalities, of adults at all the various industrial societies and religious and social works that bear such eloquent testimony to the zeal of our parish clergy. I should like you to read and meditate on these few lines of the Roman Ritual :

« *Familia quaeque distincte in libro notetur, intervallo relicto ab unaquaque ad alteram subsequentem, in quo sigillatim scribantur nomen, cognomen, aetas singulorum, qui ex familia sunt, vel tamquam advenae in ea vivunt.*

¹ *Et proprias oves vocat nominatim et educit eas.* — John, X, 3.

² Here.

Qui vero ad sacram Communionem admissi sunt, hoc signum, in margine e contra hebeant: C.

Qui sacramento Confirmationis sunt muniti, hoc signum habeant: Chr.

Qui ad alium locum habitandum accesserint, eorum nomina subducta linea notentur.

Describatur quis, et quae, et cui Sacramenta ministraverit, quando quis mortuus fuerit, et ubi sepultus¹.

You will supplement those outlines for yourselves according to the special needs of modern conditions in your various parishes ; and you may well ask yourselves could there be a more simple or efficacious means of living up to the ideal of the Good Shepherd : « I am the good shepherd ; and I know mine, and mine know me². What an excellent means of living in closer contact with every family in your parish ! Your eyes will be ever open to their spiritual needs and your zeal will never be permitted to grow cold ! Our neighbours in Holland, so justly admired for their great business capacity, regard the proper keeping of the *Liber status animarum* as one of the most imperative and indispensable duties of the priest's ministry. Let the priests of our parishes, therefore, spend their

¹ Rit Rom. Tit. X. Cap. VI. et VII.

² *Ego sum pastor bonus et cognosco meas et cognoscunt me meae.* — Joan. X. 14.

winter evenings at this work of keeping a detailed record of their parishioners ; in parishes that contain several districts, let them divide up the work between themselves and their curates ; by such means the guidance of souls will be wisely and continuously carried on.

In sober truth, my dear brothers, when we assume the pastoral charge we take on ourselves a very heavy responsibility. Every single soul in our spiritual family has a right to our care and guidance ; and for the salvation or the loss of each we shall have to render an account to God. You too are comprised among the guardians of souls of whom it is written that « they watch as being to render an account of your souls ¹ ». And if you want to know the value our Divine Master sets on each of these souls, you have only to consider, says St. Augustine, what He has paid for them to the justice of His Father : He has shed His blood for them ; and what can be compared in value to the Blood of the Man-God ² ?

The faithful in your charge have received from

¹ *Ipsi enim pervigilant, quasi rationem pro animabus vestris reddituri.* — Hebr. XIII. 17.

² *Quæritis quid emerit ? Videte quid dederit, et invenietis quid emerit. Sanguis Christi pretium est. Tanti quid valet ?* » — St. Aug. Tract. CXX. in Joann. Cf. Officium Pretiosissimi Sanguinis, in 3^o Noct.)

the divine munificence some ten talents, some five, some two, others one ; and God expects us to walk before them all on the road to perfection : « *Sacerdotem oportet praeesse* ». Our Lord is the Way, the Truth and the Life ; we represent Him among men and we are therefore wanting in our duty if we are unable to say, with the holy hardihood of the apostle, to the most advanced no less than to the beginners : « be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ » ¹. We are sometimes tempted to fancy that perfection is an ideal only for religious, and that our ambition need not aim so high. But this is a very grave mistake. St. Thomas Aquinas, whose words are always so carefully weighed, assures us on the contrary that the religious who is not a priest fulfils his vocation provided he tends to perfection, while the priest is bound by the sublime dignity of his orders, and of his functions as leader of souls, to have reached this goal and to practise perfection itself. For the sacrament of orders dedicates him who receives it to the highest functions ; it consecrates him to the service of Christ Himself living in the sacrament of our altars. Therefore the soul of the priest must be holier than the soul of

¹ *Imitatores mei estote sicut et ego Christi*. — I. Cor. IV, 16.)

the religious. Here are the Angelic Doctor's own words : *Si religiosus ordine careat, sicut patet de conversis religiosorum, sic manifestum est excellere praeeminentiam ordinis quantum ad dignitatem quia per sacrum ordinem aliquis deputatur ad dignissima ministeria quibus ipsi Christo servitur in Sacramento altaris ; ad quod requiritur major sanctitas interior, quam requirat etiam religiosus status*¹. It is not without a feeling of confusion that I quote these words for you because they bring to my mind what the holy Doctor immediately adds : that if the simple priest must be « *perfectus* », the bishop, who is the consecrator of the priests, must be « *perfector* », « *episcopi se habent ut perfectores* : he must be a source and principle of perfection to his flock and to his clergy. And that precisely is what you ask that he may be when in your charity you recite for him in the Mass this beautiful prayer : O God, the pastor and ruler of all the faithful, be propitious to Thy servant N... : grant him, we beseech Thee, that by word and example he may be helpful to those over whom he rules, so that together with the flock entrusted to him he may reach eternal life »². You number here present about three hun-

¹ *Sum. Theol.* 2a 2ae, Q. 184, art. 8. C.

² *Deus omnium fidelium Pastor et rector, famulum tuum N. propitius respice, da ei quaesumus, verbo et exemplo*

dred ; for six weeks your fellow-priests will assemble in turn around this pulpit ; may God grant we may never be separated : may we all help one another by word and example, so that one day all of us without a single exception — you surrounded by your flocks, and we with you — may be admitted to the joys of eternal life.

In the next place I say to you : Have authority over your flocks : *Sacerdotem oportet praeesse* : and, to that end, be yourselves the first to have faith in the authority with which you are invested. It is not your talent nor your personal merit that should form your chief mainstay, but your faith in the mandate you have received from the Church in the name of God Himself ; your faith in that power which, by the indelible character stamped on your soul in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, has made you a sharer in the supreme Priesthood of Jesus Christ ; your faith in that sacramental grace on which you can always rely, and which you can always revive within your souls by the fervour of your zeal : « Stir up the grace of God, which is in thee by the imposition of my hands. » ¹ We are wanting in

quibus praest proficere ut ad vitam una cum grege sibi credito perveniat sempiternam.

¹ *Resuscites gratiam Dei quae est in te, per impositionem manuum mearum.* — II. Tim. I. 6.

faith, my dear brothers, we are wanting in faith ! If our faith were livelier, and stronger, and more constant, there is nothing we could not achieve ! It is not I who say this ; it is our Divine Saviour who has said it to encourage His apostles : « Amen, Amen, I say to you, he that believeth in me, the works that I do, he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do. » ¹

Have faith then in your authority ; but do not mistake its character. It is not given you for yourselves, for your own profit or honour ; it is given you solely for the service of others : « For he is God's minister to thee, for good ² ». In heathen nations kings rule absolutely over their subjects and treat them as slaves, but with you it is the opposite to this ; in obedience to the injunction of the Divine Master, « he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger ; and he that is the leader as he that serveth ³ ». You see, then, that authority is but a means of devoting ourselves more

¹ *Amen, amen, dico vobis, qui credit in me opera quae ego facio et ipse faciet, et majora horum faciet.* — John, XVI. 12.

² *Dei enim minister est tibi in bonum.* — Rom. XIII. 4.

³ *Reges gentium dominantur eorum, vos autem non sic ; sed qui major est in vobis, fiat sicut minor ; et qui praecessor est sicut ministrator.* — Luke, XXII. 25, 26.

thoroughly to the service of those under our rule ; and hence it is that for the last fourteen centuries the highest representative of the Church's authority, the Pope, signs himself publicly as the servant of the servants of God : « *Servus servorum Dei* ».

Do you want to see united in a living example all the best qualities of a man in authority ? Turn your eyes to Rome. Pius X has only one ideal, only one aim in life : the good of the souls committed to his charge. Never does he relax his efforts to restore and vivify them all in Christ. For their sake he has renounced his own freedom. For every single one of them he has the tender kindness of a mother ; « as if a nurse should cherish her children ¹ » ; but towards all at the same time he has the inflexible firmness of a strong and enlightened father. To this great firmness in the exercise of his authority he adds an unwavering constancy that is free from all harshness or obstinacy. He knows the path to take, he looks to the goal, and he moves forward with a calm and resolute perseverance. *Fac secundum exemplar*. Behold your model and copy it.

Sacerdotem oportet praedicare. The priest is bound to preach. Yes, my dear brothers, the

¹ *Tanquam si nutrix foveat filios suos*. — Thessal. II. 7.

first duty of the apostles and their successors has ever been to make known the divine teaching to the entire world, to preach the Gospel to all mankind : « Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature » ¹. And « they going forth preached everywhere : the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed » ². It devolves also, therefore, on you who are called to share the burden of the bishops ³, and to help them in their ministry, to apply to the spiritual ailments of God's people the remedy of your teaching ; on you devolves the duty of edifying your brethren by word as well as by example : « Let your teaching be as a spiritual medicine to the people of God.... so that by preaching and example you may edify God's family » ⁴. We shall not dwell upon this grave subject to-day ; it is so important that it

¹ *Euntes in mundum universum, praedicate evangelium omni creaturae.* — Mark, XVI. 15.

² *Illi autem profecti praedicaverunt ubique, Domino cooperante et sermonem confirmante sequentibus signis.* — Ibid. 20.

³ *In adjutorium Moysi et duodecim apostolorum, Episcoporum videlicet catholicorum electi.*

⁴ *Sit doctrina vestra spiritualis medicina populo Dei., ut praedicatione atque exemplo aedificetis familiam Dei.* — Rom. Pont.

requires to be dealt with separately, *ex professo*, and we hope to return to it on some future occasion. At present we must confine ourselves to some practical hints without dealing with the reasons on which they rest.

Your function as preachers ought to induce you, especially those among you who are still young, to cultivate your voices and train your delivery by the practice of elocution. The training of our young men during their humanities is undoubtedly defective. One would judge from the present-day programmes of our school curricula that the men they are to prepare for life will never have anything to do but write ; whereas those who do write are the exceptions, while the generality of them have to speak. Apply yourselves then to the art of speaking well, that is, of giving your thoughts a clear, correct, natural and living expression. In no other way can you make speech an effective medium for communicating thought. The people are tired of empty rhetoric ; they listen with little patience and less profit to those more or less elegantly-balanced phrases which have been painfully stored up in the memory and are rehearsed from the pulpit without feeling, or with only a laboured and unreal show of feeling. Public speaking ought to be the natural expression of the speaker's sincere conviction,

a conviction too, that he longs to communicate to the minds and souls of his hearers. The language is but a vehicle for the thought and should never arrest or usurp the attention of the listeners for itself. More than all other public speakers, the preacher of God's word should wholly efface himself, so as to give due and fitting prominence to the divine truths of which he is the mouth piece. The more his language approaches the transparent clearness of crystal, and the less his own personality obstructs the rays of divine truth, the nearer will his sermon be to that « faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance » ¹ which St. Paul so earnestly recommended to his disciple Timothy.

Therefore practise speaking that you may learn to speak with ease, so that when actually preaching you may not have to sacrifice the living faith and warm love of your hearts to a painful straining after words. Granted then that you are not hindered by any distracting uneasiness about the outward form of your speech, recollect yourself and meditate before God on the subject of your discourse ; bring your faith to bear upon it ; believe in it deeply yourself ; be the first yourself to feel its

¹ *Fidelis sermo et omni acceptione dignus.* — I. Tim. IV, 9.

beneficent fruits ; and then, when your heart glows with love from the truth you are about to preach, when under the impulse of your zeal for the glory of God, the sanctification of His Holy Name, the extension of His Kingdom, the fulfilment of His thrice holy Will, you feel yourself happily eager to share with others the feelings that fill your own soul, — then, but not till then, write down your sermon. Write it with all the lively feeling you can command, without troubling too much about possible imperfections of language, or repetitions, or deviations from your original plan ; for that first outline should be a help and not a hindrance. Write out the whole twice, even three times if you are a beginner, and if possible at one sitting. You will not need then to learn what you have written by heart ; nor need you bind yourself to the painful task of repeating it word for word to your audience. The fact that your thoughts have been accurately expressed in writing, under the influence of earnest inspiration, should fully reassure you that you possess, though perhaps unconsciously for the moment, the most fitting means of expressing them, that these means reside within your memory, and that they will again arise at your command in the pulpit with all the freshness of a new birth.

What is of the highest importance, therefore,

dear brothers, for the success of the preacher, is the *remote preparation*, that is to say, the spirit of prayer, the union of the soul with God, the living action of faith, of hope, and of love, and the desire to win over his hearers to accept that truth and that law to which he has first lovingly submitted himself. When about to proclaim aloud the Gospel to the congregation, the deacon prays for purity of heart as a first grace : « Cleanse my heart and my lips, O Almighty God !... That I may worthily proclaim Thy holy Gospel ». And the priest, blessing him, answers : The Lord be in thy heart and on thy lips, that thou mayest worthily and in a becoming manner announce His holy Gospel : in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen¹. It is in the light of these holy sentiments that you must look on your work as a preacher : if you do so, I promise you, in the name of God, supported by the divine example of Our Lord in the Gospel, by the traditions of the Fathers, by the lives of the saints, by the recent recommendations of Pius X in his admirable Encyclical *Acerbo nimis*, — I promise you that, even

¹ *Munda cor meum, ac labia mea, omnipotens Deus !... ut sanctum tuum Evangelium digne valeam nuntiare... Dominus sit in corde tuo et in labiis tuis : ut digne et competenter annunties Evangelium suum : in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.*

though you be as wanting in eloquence and literary culture as was the Curé of Ars, you will nevertheless work wonders : you will be spared indeed the empty eulogies that are won by elegantly turned phrases, but you will teach and move your attentive listeners to love and to serve God better. You will reach their hearts and souls because you will speak directly to *them* : not to an imaginary congregation, nor in terms above the level, or ill-adapted to the needs, of that congregation in flesh and blood which is there actually before you, hungering for the nourishment of God's word.

Conformably with the diocesan statutes, be sure to give your brief instruction every Sunday at each of your masses, and to preach your sermon at the principal mass. Have special series of discourses for your afternoon congregations, for your sodalities of young people, and especially for your guilds for the men, some of whom, alas ! hardly know the road to the church. Always peruse carefully beforehand the documents your religious superiors issue to you from time to time for communication to your parishioners. Reading aloud well is not an easy art ; it cannot be acquired without diligent preparation.

To the influence of the spoken word you will add that of good literature. Innumerable are the

ways in which profitable reading matter can be diffused ; there are the parochial or diocesan bulletins, pamphlets, books from the lending library, good newspapers ; almost unlimited means, in fact, you have to select from, and your own zeal will tell you what exactly is best suited to the special needs of your parishioners.

It remains for me to say a few words about the last of the priestly functions indicated by the Roman Pontifical, the administration of the Sacraments. Here also I must necessarily be brief.

Sacerdotem oportet baptizare. — The priest must administer Baptism and in general all the sacraments. I know you carry out these holy functions with punctuality and zeal. I need not therefore remind you of the obligations the liturgy imposes in regard to them : but the present is an appropriate occasion for us to try and enliven our faith. The sacraments are the visible signs of an invisible grace which they confer by a hidden agency upon the soul. Regarded from without, they have no religious meaning. The observer who has not the happiness to possess the true faith would take them for ordinary, every-day occurrences, too trivial for serious notice. Are we not ourselves inclined, from our familiarity with them, to see in them only what strikes the senses ? Even the most august

sacrament of all, the Holy Eucharist, — what is it for an unbeliever, or for a careless christian, but a mere equivalent of our ordinary daily bread ?

*Visus, tactus, gustus in te fallitur,
Sed auditu solo tuto creditur :
CREDO quidquid dixit Dei filius ;
Nil hoc verbo veritatis verius.*

It is this *Credo* that is enjoined on all of us. Yes ! I believe, on the word of my God, in the invisible supernatural realities, of which the sacramental externals are but a visible sign. If a preparatory act of recollection is expected of me before I address myself to God in prayer — « Before prayer prepare thy soul : and be not as a man that tempteth God ¹ », — how much greater reason have I to enliven my faith before I place myself in direct dependence on the Supreme Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, to receive into myself His supernatural power to restore sanctifying grace to souls or increase it in them, by virtue of the words I am to speak and the act I am to perform. Priests you are, never more fully, effectively, really, than just at the moment of operating such an effect. And yet would you be wilfully distracted and let your eyes wander

¹ *Ante orationem præpara animam tuam et noli esse quasi homo qui tentat Deum.* — Eccli. XVIII, 23.

unguarded around, and lend your ears to idle conversations, and raise your hands without reverence, anointed as they are with the holy oils ! Oh reflect well on it all ! I know, of course, that the indifference and carelessness which the faithful sometimes bitterly reproach us with — forgetting the all-pervasive influence of everyday routine — are never deliberately willed or indulged in by us ; but that is not enough : they should be deliberately avoided. If there are sins of commission there are also sins of omission. You cannot be unmindful of the great good that is done, both to the believing and to the unbelieving, in France, Belgium, England and Germany, by the simple demonstration of the majesty of the Catholic ritual as carried out daily by the children of Saint Benedict. Apart altogether from the preaching and other functions of their pastoral ministry, the very spectacle of the religious solemnity of their liturgy, the majestic harmony of its whole arrangement, the care bestowed upon its smallest details, the convincing piety of its officiants : those things have all an incalculable attraction for souls, awakening in them now a first efficacious desire to draw nearer to God, or again a fuller and deeper transport of divine love. Now every priest in his own parish can carry on this silent but powerful apostolate. Do not neglect or undervalue

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it : with its sweet and delicate influence it will incline many a heart to receive submissively and piously that preaching — oft times necessarily more austere — which points to duty and to sacrifice. Treat therefore with reverence all things holy : « *Sancta sancte* » : through zeal as well as through piety.

Let your whole exterior bear evident testimony to the sincerity of your faith. And in this connection let me remind you of three practical recommendations I made to you already. The first concerns yourselves, the other two the faithful. At Mass when you genuflect before the Blessed Sacrament remain an appreciable moment on your knee : « *genuflexus adorat* » says the rubric. Secondly, teach the faithful to look at the Sacred Host and the Precious Blood, when you elevate them for adoration, and encourage your people to give expression to their adoration in the indulgenced prayer, « My Lord and my God — *Dominus meus et Deus meus* ». Thirdly, at the *Domine non sum dignus* do not allow the faithful to sit down : remind them constantly, until you have rooted out this bad habit, that the triple tinkling of the bell announces the priest's communion under both species and invites the faithful to make a spiritual if not a sacramental communion.

Your faith will tell you that a strict

observance of cleanliness and hygiene in all that concerns the worship of God is but a necessary form of reverence for religion. Never tolerate in the baptismal font, in the holy-water stoups, in the confessionals, in the church furniture, in the dress of acolytes or church-attendants, any lack of cleanliness that would shock you in a well-ordered house. Remove from your sacristies all vestments that social propriety would oblige you to cast aside were they ordinary articles of clothing. And surely you ought, with a holy indignation, to remove any altar-linen you would not consider good enough for the table to which you invite a friend. Learn to look on the sanctuary lamp as the expression of the ardent aspirations of your own hearts to the Blessed Sacrament, when the cares and occupations of your days prevent you from coming in person before the tabernacle. Wait for your penitents in the confessional, rather than make them wait for you. Have reverence for the holy oils. Visit your sick frequently ; and with still greater assiduity when they are in danger of death. Regard it as a duty of charity to provide them with an opportunity of seeing more than one priest in their last illness, that it may be easier for them to unburden their conscience completely and so as to die in peace.

Those then, according to the Roman Pontifical,

are the principal obligations of your pastoral ministry.

What, now, are the interior dispositions which will assure for you the success of this ministry ?

II.

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS IN THE PASTORAL MINISTRY.

The Roman Pontifical demands from the priest a *heavenly wisdom* ; a *holy life* based upon irreproachable morals, upon long-standing habits of virtue, and finding expression in the highest degree of charity towards God and our neighbour ; *earnest co-operation* with his bishop ; and an *unbounded confidence* in the power of divine grace.

A heavenly wisdom, coelestis sapientia. — Dear brothers, the priesthood is neither a profession nor a human art ; it is a divine ministry. Neither talent nor industry can make up for lack of grace. Good-will and natural activity in well-doing, will suffice still less for the priest than for the ordinary Christian : the priest has constant need of the mercy of God. « It is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy » ¹. Prayer and the

¹ *Non volentis neque currentis, sed miserentis est Dei.* — Rom. IX. 16.

study of the sacred sciences are indispensable instruments of his intellectual formation. And mere speculative science will not suffice ; he must add to this that practical sacred science which will teach him to love and to cherish (*sapor, sapidus, sapientia*) the truths he has to proclaim to the world.

We reserve for another occasion the counsels we should like to impart to you concerning the study of the Holy Scriptures, the different branches of theology, and especially ascetic or mystic theology. Nor will we speak here about prayer, all-important as it is : you will do well to recall what I have already said in these Discourses and in the *Conferences to our Seminarists* ¹.

Holiness of life, probi mores. — The roman Pontifical requires from the priest *irreproachable morals, probi mores* ; a long training in virtue, which may be summed up in the word « justice » : *diuturna totius justitiae observatio* ; perfection in speech and conduct ; « *verbo et opere perfectus* » ; twofold charity, towards God and towards our neighbour : « *gemina dilectio* » ; a life, in fact, whose holy fragrance will delight the church of Christ : « *Sit odor vitae vestrae delectamentum Ecclesiae Christi.* » All this is summed up in the phrase : « a life of holiness ».

My dear brothers, we live in difficult times ;

¹ CARDINAL MERCIER's *Conferences to his Seminarists*. Translated by J. M. O'Kavanagh. Washbourne, London. Benziger, New-York.

the parochial ministry is laborious and trying. It is not an uncommon thing to hear from active, zealous priests a half-involuntary cry of helplessness : I can do absolutely nothing ; I have tried my best and my parish is going down hopelessly. » Now much might be said on this matter and I regret I cannot speak to you *ex professo* on this danger of discouragement. But at least bear this in mind : that no effort is lost before God ; that real success, which is already assured to you in His hidden designs, will be made manifest only when He pleases to let it shine forth ; that perhaps in the judgment of the divine Master you are not just yet sufficiently diffident of yourselves and confident in Him, to receive immediately that abundance of graces and blessings which He has in store for you. But however all that may be, supposing even that your efforts really have been unsuccessful, listen to what the saintly Curé of Ars one day replied to a fellow-priest whose troubles were as great as yours : « My dear brother », said the holy man to him, « you say you have done everything and failed ». Are you really sure you have done everything ? You have prayed, yes ; and you have worked, yes again ; but have you done penance ? have you fasted and watched ? ».

No, my dear friends, the cross of Christ has lost none of its power ; it is still as in the time

of St. Paul, a foolishness to unbelievers, a stumbling-block to Jews, but also a « divine virtue — *Dei virtus* », for him who has faith, — that is, a full, consistent, active faith : « We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the gentiles foolishness : But unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. » ¹ There are no two ways of being a christian ; the disciple must not expect to be better treated than his Master. « Should we not blush », says St. Bernardine of Sienna, « to be pampered members of a Head that is crowned with thorns ? » As long as we have not taught the faithful the law of christian penance ; as long as we ourselves, who preach the Gospel in *words*, have not put our *lives* in harmony with the life of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the lives of His saints ; as long as poverty, sobriety, self-sacrifice, resignation if not cheerfulness in suffering, patience if not joy in humiliation, do not enter into our lives as priests and apostles of Christ ; we have no right to complain to Almighty God of our want

¹ *Nos autem prædicamus Christum crucifixum, Judæis quidem scandalum, gentibus autem stultitiam ; ipsis autem vocatis Judæis atque Græcis Christum Dei virtutem et Dei sapientiam. — I Cor. 23. 24.*

of success, or to say to Him : « Lord, Thou hast deceived us ».

Oh yes ! I know well and feel keenly that these are austere words, and that you will be perhaps inclined to meet them with the cry that escaped St. Peter on a memorable occasion : « This saying is hard and who can bear it ? » ¹ But remember, my dear brothers, it is not a question of what first impression the Gospel may produce on our faltering natures ; the question is rather if what I have been recalling to you *is* the Gospel, and if the Gospel is true. And which of us dare doubt it ? Or who could venture, on his knees before a crucifix, to question the sublime law of christian mortification ? It is the natural impression that deceives ; it is Christ who is right ; to strengthen the dictates of your own Christian hearts thereon, you have only to make the Way of the Cross, or to read the two chapters of the *Imitation of Christ*, on *The small number of the lovers of the cross of Jesus* and *The royal road of the Holy Cross* ² ; there you will realize that once the soul becomes docile to grace the cross will not banish peace from it, but will bring peace into

¹ *Durus est hic sermo et quis potest eum audire.* — John, VI. 61.

² Bk. II., ch. 12.

it, and a peace that will calmly conquer all the opposing passions and impulses of nature.

How many a shattered constitution there is that a more regular, moderate manner of life would have saved ! How many lives are shortened by that accursed alcohol, not merely, remember, when taken in the brutal excess that is an outrage on social decency, but no less surely also when absorbed in those constantly repeated doses which gradually instil the poison into the system, disturb the healthy balance of the organism, cloud the intelligence, and end by utterly debasing and materializing the whole man ! How can we hope to fight the horrible scourge of alcohol with any chance of success, so long as we have for it only an indifferent or indulgent smile ?

I am writing these lines on the feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, that angelic young man whose virginal purity no evil breath was ever allowed to tarnish : and yet he fasted, and chastised and mortified his frail body. « If we have not followed him in his innocence, » the Church implores of us, « can we not at least imitate him in his penance ? — *Innocentem non secuti, paenitentem imitemur.* » And in the Offertory of his Mass, she wisely and appropriately puts before us the warning of the Psalmist : « Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord : or

who shall stand in his holy place ? The innocent in hands and clean of heart » ¹. This, then, is the time and place to expose a pernicious sophism of the present day — one that may easily mislead us. When we are told of the terrible mortifications of the saints ; for instance that the holy Curé of Ars often contented himself with hard, stale crusts from the wallets of beggars ; that cold boiled potatoes without any condiment, or a cup of milk and a crust of dry bread, made up his usual daily fare ; that his bed was a straw mattress, often made harder by a plank he put into it ; that he allowed himself usually but three hours' sleep ; that he wore a hair shirt ; that he so mortified his flesh with iron chains that his linen was always covered with blood, and his body — his « corpse » as he called it — torn with wounds : when we are told these things we have ready our reply in self-defence : « *Admiranda, non imitanda* », we say, — « These are extraordinary things, things to admire but not to imitate. » Now, of course, heroism is not expected from everyone. Penances like those, the bare thought of which makes us shudder, it would not even be prudent to attempt except in obedience to a special inspiration and

¹ *Quis ascendet in montem Domini ? Aut quis stabit in loco sancto ejus ? Innocens manibus et mundo corde.* — Ps. XXIII, 3, 4.

under the discriminating guidance of a prudent and duly authorised director. Nor does anyone suggest that the austerities of St. Francis of Assisi, or St. Charles Borromeo, or S. Alphonsus Liguori, or the Curé of Ars, should be straight-way imitated *en bloc* by mere beginners such as we are in the practice of penance : rather they are put before us that we may appreciate the distance which separates us from those whom the Church raises to her altars for our veneration. Those extraordinary penances of the saints were not the result of *their* first attempts : often it was not till towards the end of their saintly lives that they practised such penances in all their stern severity : and certainly we are not called on to begin where they finished. But is this a reason why we should not at least have the ambition to finish where they began ? Or is it reasonable for us to decline even to enter on the thorny path at the end of which we see the dazzling brilliancy of their holiness, on the pretext that we do not here and now feel ourselves brave enough to press forward as far or to strive on as resolutely as they did ? St. Alphonsus Liguori bound himself by vow never to lose a moment. For that we admire him, but do not dare to imitate him. Very well ; no one will blame us. But do you not think that the holy hardihood of this untiring

worker ought at least to prick the consciences of those who close their ears altogether to the tender pleadings of the Divine Saviour of souls, those who give up hour after hour, in selfish indulgence, to the frivolity of idle reading or lazy lounging, to aimless visiting, and empty conversations, to long daily sessions at table, in gaming or smoking : occupations which no one could truthfully describe as necessary recreations or legitimate relaxations from work.

Let us, then, be faithful to the grace of the present moment ; let us follow its inspiration ; let us advance from day to day : « sufficient for the day is the evil thereof ¹ ». Let us rouse and stimulate ourselves at break of day to foster within us pure, manly hearts, and to subdue our flesh by temperance in eating and drinking :

*« Sint pura cordis intima,
Absistat et vecordia ;
Carnis terat superbiam
Potus cibique parcitas. »*

And at night again let us remind ourselves of the law of christian temperance and watchfulness : « *Fratres, sobrii estote et vigilate* ». We must be conspicuous by our virtue, by our faith, by

¹ *Sufficit diei malitia sua.* — Matt. VI. 34.

our zeal in the profession of that faith ; and we must subdue our passions by abstemious lives, if we would find a place at the heavenly banquet : —

*« Virtute clarus et fide,
Confessione sedulus,
Jejuna membra deferens
Dapes supernas obtinet¹ ».*

The priest must be diligent in co-operating with the work of his Bishop : « Sint providi cooperatores ordinis nostri » — You have heard now what the Roman Pontifical prescribes in regard to the first two conditions of success in the pastoral ministry : supernatural wisdom and a saintly life. Besides these, it is further necessary that priests work in harmony with their bishop : they have their allotted place by his side, they are by right his associates, his fellow-workers : *Electi ad eorum (Pontificum) societatis et operis adjumentum.*

The Pontifical reminds us that in the beginning bishops were the sole recipients of the prerogatives of the apostolic ministry. But just as Moses found it necessary to seek the help of seventy counsellors to conduct the multitude through the desert, just as Aaron received help from his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, so in like manner

¹ Off. Conf. non Pont. ad Laudes.

the bishops, successors of the apostles, conscious of their own insufficiency, rejoice to see placed providentially at their side a larger band of priests to make up for that weakness¹. All, then, both priests and bishop, each in his own proper place, form together the members of the one mystical body which is Christ². « For », says St. Ignatius of Antioch, in his admirable letter to the Ephesians, » « just as Jesus Christ, the indissoluble bond of the life of the Church, is the expression of the life of the Father, so in their turn, the bishops, distributed everywhere over the earth, are the expression of the thought of Jesus Christ. And therefore », he adds, « you should place yourselves under the direction of your bishops, as indeed you do. For your clergy who are favourably known, and worthy of their Divine Master, unite themselves with their bishop as the chords of a lyre are attached to the frame that supports them : and so your thoughts and hearts unite in sweet accord to sing the praises of Christ. Thus, too, do you proclaim and chant, through Jesus Christ, the glory of the Father, so that the Father will hear you and seeing your

¹ *Quapropter infirmitati quoque nostrae, Domine, quaesumus, haec adjumenta largire qui quanto fragiliores sumus, tanto his pluribus indigemus..*

² *Ex multis, et alternae dignitatis membris unum corpus Christi efficitur. — Rom. Pont.*

good works acknowledge you as members of His Son ¹.

To whom more directly than to ourselves is addressed the wish of our Lord in that discourse which is as it were the testament of His Divine Heart : « *Ut sint unum !* » — « that they may be as one, as we also are » ².

Turn your thoughts back to the closing scene of the ceremony of your ordination. The bishop, grasping your clasped hands paternally in his own, demanded of you if you would promise respect and obedience to himself and his successors : *Promittis mihi et successoribus meis reverentiam et obedientiam ?* And you, on bended knees, aware of the deeply religious character of your act, allowed those clasped hands to rest

¹ *Etenim Jesus Christus, inseparabilis nostra vita, sententia patris est, ut et episcopi, per tractus terrae constituti, sententia Jesu Christi sunt. Unde decet vos in episcopi sententiam concurrere, quod et facitis. Nam memorabile vestrum presbyterium, dignum Deo, ita coaptatum est episcopo, ut chordae citharae. Propter hoc ex consensu vestro et concordi caritate Jesus Christus per concordiam, melos Dei recipientes in unitate, cante-tis voce una per Jesum Christum Patri, quo et vos audiat et agnoscat ex iis quae bene operamini, membra esse vos filii ipsius. Utile itaque est, in immaculata unitate vos esse, ut et semper participetis Deo. — S. Ignatii Antiocheni, Epist. ad Ephesios, IV. (Opera Patrum Apostolicorum Ed. Funck, I. p. 177. Tübingae, 1881.)*

² John, XVII. 11.

with filial confidence in your bishop's, and you gave him that answer which you have never regretted : « *Promitto* — I promise. » You have not forgotten that solemn promise, nor with what confidence in your fidelity the bishop immediately adressed you, to inform you that thenceforth he would treat you as friends and that his ministry would have no secrets for you : « *Jam non dicam vos servos, sed amicos, quia omnia cognovistis quae operatus sum in medio vestri.* » Faithful to your undertaking, true to the spirit of that solemn promise, true at the same time to the spirit of the Church, — which in her sacred hierarchy derives Her authority not from the voice of the masses but from a divine delegation of the Chief to the Twelve and their successors, — you do well, my dear brothers, to regard yourselves as loyal, trusted and zealous fellow-workers with your bishop : it is in acquitting yourselves to the best of your power of all that is implied in the charge committed to you, that you will assure for yourselves the recompense of eternal happiness ¹.

The help of grace. — « *Quod Deus vobis concedat per gratiam suam.* All those qualities which the

¹ *Sint providi cooperatores ordinis nostri... ut bonam rationem dispensationis sibi creditae reddituri, aeternae beatitudinis praemia consequantur.* »

Church assumes you possess, all those efforts which she demands from you, would never of themselves suffice, my dear brothers, to assure the success of your mission ; we must ever keep in mind, with deep humility, this supreme teaching which stands out from every page of the Gospel, from the dogma of the Redemption, from the institution of the sacraments, from the liturgy of our Ordination : The apostolic ministry is, in its origin, its purpose, and its exercise, an essentially supernatural work, and therefore the priest cannot accomplish it fruitfully unless as an instrument of the grace of the Holy Ghost : « Our sufficiency is from God » ¹. Do not rely then on any consciousness of your own personal worth ; neither disdain him whose worth and achievements are less apparent than your own. Remember in good time the pharisee of the Gospel : how he contemplates his own virtue, makes his piety pander to his pride, thanks God for having made him better than others, fasts twice a week, gives tithes of all his goods to the poor, and judges the inner worth of his life by the outer parade of his works. Then the publican : *he* does not boast of any good act of his ; but he stops in confusion at the threshold of the Temple, and ashamed to

¹ *Sufficientia nostra ex Deo est.* — II. Cor. III. 5.

lift his eyes to heaven he strikes his breast and cries out : « O God, be merciful to me the sinner » ¹. It is the publican who returns to his house justified, not the pharisee, « because, » says the Divine Master, » every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted » ².

The mortification and detachment which you practise will smoothe the way for the inflowing of grace into your souls, according to that word of the prophet Isaias, which St. John the Baptist preached in the country about the Jordan : « Every valley shall be filled ; and every mountain and hill shall be brought low » ³, — but only the divine Paraclete Himself can actually sanctify you. And so it is from the benediction of the Holy Spirit and from a virtue infused by Him that the Church expects all the graces needed for the priestly office : « Pour out upon these Thy servants the benediction of the Holy

¹ *Deus, propitius esto mihi peccatori.* Luke XVIII. 9-14. The greek version uses the definite article here : *the sinner.* μοι τῷ ἁμαρτωλῷ.

² *Dico vobis descendit hic justificatus in domum suam ab illo ; quia omnis qui se exaltat humiliabitur, et qui se humiliat exaltabitur.* — *ibid.*, 14.

³ *Omnis vallis implebitur et omnis mons et collis humiliabitur.* Luke, III. 5.

Spirit and the virtue of sacerdotal grace » ¹. Then, after enumerating at great length, the qualities and services She requires of her priests, She concludes the recitation of them by the simple prayer : « May God by His grace enable you to fulfil your mission » ².

Every morning at the altar the priest strikes his breast and repeats this humble prayer : « And to us sinners, Thy servants, hoping in the multitude of Thy mercies, vouchsafe to grant some part and fellowship with Thy holy apostles and martyrs.... and all Thy saints.... into whose company we beseech Thee to admit us, not in consideration of our merit, but of Thy merciful pardon » ³.

CONCLUSION.

Concluding this long discourse I feel a certain uneasiness : Have I not possibly overburdened or discouraged you ? You feel perhaps that too

¹ *Super hos famulos tuos benedictionem Sancti Spiritus et gratiae sacerdotalis infunde virtutem.*

² *Quod Deus vobis concedat per gratiam suam.*

³ *Nobis quoque peccatoribus famulis tuis, de multitudine miserationum tuarum sperantibus, partem aliquam et societatem donare digneris cum tuis Sanctis Apostolis et Martyribus.... et omnibus sanctis tuis : intra quorum nos consortium, non aestimator meriti, sed veniae, quaesumus, largitor admitte. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. — Canon of the Mass.*

much is demanded of you, and with too great insistence ? If so, do not, I implore you, reject my counsels *en bloc*, as being beyond your strength. Do not cast them off with a shrug of the shoulders, as we turn away, too frequently, alas ! with unpardonable cowardice from the bright examples of the bravery of the saints. Remember, you came here to this Retreat, for the purpose of laying in a store of provisions : carry them away, I beseech you, in supplies that will meet your needs during the whole of that life's journey you are to resume to-morrow. We have traced for you the map of the whole journey ; we have pointed out the principal stages you will have to pass ; we have not concealed from you the difficulties of the road : was it not better to spare you the bitterness of a later disillusioning ? But the duration of the journey is uncertain : go forward in patience and peace. The psalmist says, speaking of the just man : « He shall be like a tree that is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season. » ¹ It would not be wise to undertake the construction of a building before having fixed on a plan

¹ *Et erit tanquam lignum, quod plantatum est secus decursus aquarum, quod fructum suum dabit in tempore suo. — Ps. I. 3.*

for its general form, for its main lines, and even for its minor details. But that is not saying that we should try to execute the whole work straight away in all its parts. It took our ancestors centuries to build their cathedrals. Set to work, then : commence to build ; but leave it to God to determine the period of your efforts.

Build on then : you are commissioned to construct in your parish « the house, that is, the family of God » : « *Ut aedificetis domum, id est, familiam Dei.* » Every soul committed to your pastoral charge is a stone of that edifice : labour at it, carve it, shape it ; then raise it up, united with all the others and with God by the cement of charity : raise it aloft even to the height of heaven :

« *Scalpri salubris ictibus
Et tunsione plurima
Fabri polita malleo
Hanc saxa molem construunt
Aptisque juncta nexibus
Locantur in fastigio* ».

On the great day when the Sovereign Judge will demand of you a strict account of your ministry, may we have no reason to regret that we confided it to you, nor you that you accepted it from us ! May we all without exception deserve

to be rewarded and not condemned by the Lord! God grant this to all of us by His grace! « *Ut aedificetis domum, id est, familiam Dei, quatenus nec nos de vestra protectione nec vos de tanti officii susceptione damnari a Domino sed remunerari potius mereamur. Quod Deus vobis concedat per gratiam suam* ».

NINTH DISCOURSE.

Shall we persevere ?

- I. — Happy Dispositions of the Soul under the Guidance of the Holy Spirit.
 - II. — Means of perseverance.
-

NINTH DISCOURSE.

Shall we persevere ?

*Mihi autem adhaerere Deo
bonum est : ponere in Do-
mino Deo spem meam.*

« It is good for me to
adhere to my God, to put
my hope in the Lord God ».

— Ps. LXXII. 28.

My dear brothers, we are drawing near the close of our exercises. Already your grateful hearts vibrate with the glad music of the solemn *Te Deum* in which your voices are soon to join, and presently you will renew your priestly promises in all the freshness of their original fervour. I would now fain attempt to interpret for you the dispositions awakened in you, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, by the beneficent atmosphere of this Retreat, and to fix your attention for a last time on the means of keeping them ever fresh and operative in your lives.

We will consider therefore in this Discourse :
I. The happy dispositions of the soul under the guidance of the Holy Spirit ;

II. The means of persevering in these dispositions.

I.

HAPPY DISPOSITIONS OF THE SOUL UNDER THE
GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The author of the *Imitation* has written these bold words : « He that is wise and well instructed in spirit stands above all the vicissitudes of this world » ¹. In heaven the splendour of the Divine Perfections will detach us from the consideration of all that is fleeting : we shall feel ourselves drawn beyond the spheres where dwell the saints and angels, beyond even the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Most Holy Humanity of Our Saviour, into the possession of the One Supreme Good, wherein all our aspirations will rest fixed and satisfied forever. God will reveal to our souls His ravishing, all-subduing Beauty ; wholly disenchanted with self, we shall surrender all our being unreservedly to Him, happy beyond all conception in our final powerlessness to love ought else than Him. We shall love Him as He loves Himself, « For when He shall appear, we shall be like Him » ². His life, without absorbing us,

¹ *De Imit. Christi*, Lib. III, Cap. XXXIII : De instabilitate cordis.

² *Quoniam cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus.* — I. John, III, 2.

will become our life. St. Paul has said it : « He will be all in all » ¹.

Then will terrestrial shadows vanish. Then will even the most elevated of creatures see their ephemeral worth wane into nothingness. All that is not God will appear to us in its naked truth : as worn-out garments, frayed and falling in rags : « they shall grow old as a garment » ². « But thou art the self-same and thy years shall not fail » ³. Living thus in the divine Life, freed from the cramping bonds of self, exalted by the glorifying influence of the Divine Beauty, we shall share in the kingship of the Sovereign Lord of Creation. Then shall we understand that word of St. Peter to the early Christians : « You are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation » ⁴.

But according as the condition of this earthly life is conformed by grace to the heavenly, so we become more conscious of the growth and strengthening of this kingly power within us. The Retreat has cut off whatever is accessory and accidental to your existence ; it has freed you from a bondage of trifles in which you were

¹ *Omnia in omnibus.* — I. Cor. XV. 28.

² *Omnes ut vestimentum veterascent.* — Hebr. I. 11.

³ *Tu autem idem ipse es et anni tui non deficient* — ibid. 12.

⁴ *Genus electum, gens sancta, regale sacerdotium.* — I. Petr.

unknowingly entangled ; and now that your soul is face to face with its God, « *sola soli* », it feels an unwonted vigour that fills it with joy. *Rerum Deus tenax vigor, immotus in te permanens* » ¹ : « Yes, my God ! it is Thou only, the Immutable, who givest endurance and vigour to the works of Thy hands » ! The more we realize the vanity of all that is not God, the more is our inner nature consciously elevated and ennobled. The man who lacks conviction, the pusillanimous man, is at the mercy of every wave that buffets him ; he lets the current carry him down, and away out into the unknown ocean. But the man of resolution faces the storm ; firm and calm he stands, while all around him bends or wavers : flattery will not move him, nor blandishments soften him, nor threats avail to disturb his purpose. He *has character*, we say, he is *a man*. Yes, he has *character* ; that is revealed in the strength and vigour of his will. And he is a *man* : for he possesses in an eminent degree what constitutes the dignity of man, — the control over his own will, self-mastery.

The Retreat has strengthened in you the consciousness of this sovereign power of self-mastery. While it has been separating you from creatures and leaving your immortal soul in solitude before

¹ Hymn. ad Nonam.

its God, your vision has become clearer, your will has grown stronger. Aided by light and grace from on High, you have been gradually ascending heights where faith has fixed your dearest hopes : « Blessed is the man whose help is from thee : in his heart he has disposed to ascend by steps, in the vale of tears, in the place which he hath set ¹. » And now in the peaceful fervour of this last day of the Retreat you feel inclined to cry out : « What have I in Heaven ? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth ?.... Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever » ². « It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God » ³. While this ennobling, simplifying process was gladdening your soul with the joy of a new-found liberty, a calm consciousness of order and equilibrium was taking possession of you. You felt that your whole inner life — of impressions, thoughts, resolutions, actions — was assuming an even,

¹ *Beatus vir cujus est auxilium abs te, ascensiones in corde suo disposuit in valle lacrymarum in loco (locum) quem posuit.* — Ps. LXXXIII, 6.

² *Quid enim mihi est in coelo ? Et a te quid volui super terram ?.... Deus cordis mei et pars mea, Deus, in aeternum.* Ps. LXXII, 25, 26.

³ *Mihi autem adhaerere Deo bonum est, ponere in Domino Deo spem meam.* — Ps. LXXII, 26.

harmonious complexion. This you realized to be the sweetest fruit of your good endeavours ; and it has diffused a delightful feeling of peace and joy throughout your whole moral being : « Much peace have they that love thy law ; and to them there is no stumbling block » ¹. Possibly those emotions of spiritual joy may have found expression even in your physical life ; or, possibly, you may have spent the greater part of these days of retreat in what Bossuet calls « derelictions » ; it matters little : for your soul is at rest ; it is self-possessed ; it reposes peacefully trustfully, lovingly in God. Trials will come ; temptations will arise ; you know it ; you await them undismayed. You know that victory is won by effort, that triumph is achieved by strenuous striving, that God crowns only those who have toiled and suffered for Him. « Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to those that love Him » ². And so it is that faith leads to constancy in love. You have found Him, whom, without

¹ *Pax multa diligentibus legem tuam et non est illis scandalum.* — Ps. CXVIII. 165.

² *Beatus vir qui suffert tentationem, quoniam cum probatus fuerit, accipiet coronam vitæ, quam repromisit Deus diligentibus se.* — James, I. 12.

sufficiently knowing it, you really loved : you will hold Him fast and never let Him go ¹.

You will be good in your own interior lives ; you will be without reproach before God ; you will be kind and generous towards your neighbour. As long as this present life lasts, the sharp conflict between « the flesh and the spirit », under which St. Paul himself groaned, will assuredly be your lot too ; but grace will enable you to be patient with yourselves, and will give you the victory over all that is rebellious within you.

You will have recognized, my dear Brothers, in what I have just been roughly sketching for you, the faithful picture of your interior lives : I have been following, almost word for word, St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. Those two opposing tendencies of our fallen nature, « the flesh and the spirit », making respectively for what St. Augustine was to call the two cities, the earthly and the heavenly, are at war in the heart of every man. The freedom of the children of God consists in self-liberation from the snares and shackles of the flesh. The triumph of the spirit — charity, which spreads itself abroad throughout the soul — is just this holy freedom : « wherewith Christ

¹ *Inveni quem diligit anima mea, tenui eum nec dimittam.*
— Cant. III. 4.

has made us free » ¹, « Stand fast, » therefore, he continues », and be not held again under the yoke of bondage » ². « For you, brethren, have been called unto liberty : only make not liberty an occasion to the flesh, but by charity of the spirit serve one another » ³. « The fruit of the spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity goodness, faith, mildness, continence, chastity ⁴ ». « The Fruit », observes St. Thomas, is a certain final and pleasing product from a thing ⁵ ». The fruits of the Holy Spirit are the ultimate issue and the sweetest recompense of the soul's efforts in the daily struggles and vicissitudes of its inner life. Taste and relish them, dear brothers, and give yourselves up ever more and more generously to the love that has procured them for you. After the example of our Divine Master let us nourish ourselves on the accomplishment

¹ *Qua libertate Christus nos liberavit.* — Gal. IV. 31.

² *State et nolite iterum iugo servitutis contineri.* — Gal. V, I.

³ *Vos enim in libertatem vocati estis, fratres : tantum ne libertatem in occasionem detis carnis, sed per caritatem Spiritus servite invicem.* — Gal. V. 13.

⁴ *Fructus autem Spiritus est caritas, gaudium, pax, patientia, benignitas, bonitas, fides, mansuetudo, continentia, castitas.* — Gal. V. 22. 23. (Greek Version.)

⁵ *Fructus dicitur aliquod finale et suave ex re productum.* S. Thom. *In Epist. ad Galatas* lect. 6^a Cfr. *Summ. Theol.* 1^a 2^{ae}, Q. 70.

of our heavenly Father's Will in all things. « My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me » ¹. Thus while your joy, itself a fruit of the charity of the Holy spirit, will have led you towards love, that love in turn will deepen your joy, and your hearts thus expanded with a still greater generosity will go forward to meet the labours, and perhaps the sorrows, which await you in the discharge of your ministry.

But I fancy, my dear brothers, that I can still devine a secret uneasiness which may be troubling your peace. At the beginning of the Retreat I said to you : « Give yourselves up to the task of making it well : it cannot be without its effect upon you : you will come out of it, each of you, either better or worse than you entered it The Retreat is now over ; you are all leaving it — better I am sure. But will you remain faithful ? Or how are you to persevere in the holy and happy dispositions in which you now find yourselves ?

II.

MEANS OF PERSEVERANCE.

Like causes in like conditions produce the same effects.

¹ *Meus cibus est ut faciam voluntatem ejus qui misit me.* — John, IV. 34.

No doubt you will not always have the effusions of piety that made these days of Retreat so precious to you all. The Retreat is but a halt on the hard road of our ministry. Its purpose is only to refresh us. It is not a final resting place. To-morrow we must resume once more our daily toil, we must plunge anew into that ocean of cares, and worries, and duties, and distractions, and turmoil, which forms our natural and normal element. Our life will be no longer what it has been here. It cannot be. We have not become secular priests to live the lives of Carthusians in a monastic solitude. Our normal atmosphere is that of action, the spending of ourselves in the constant service of others. Still, « the wise man rules his surroundings, and is not dominated by them » ; in other words, despite the constant pressure of your pastoral work, you must set aside in each of your days, cost what it may, a place for Prayer. You have no right, for any reason, or under any pretext, to sacrifice your interior liberty ; and without Prayer there *is* no liberty.

The collier who delves in the dark, dusty mine would soon lose all his energy if he did not fill his lungs with the pure air of heaven every morning and lave his begrimed and weary body in the refreshing evening bath. The stifling and often infected moral atmosphere of the world, in

which we are constantly moving, demands imperatively on our part that we have recourse to prayer and to the salutary bath of self-examination and contrition, if we would preserve our souls from slow consumption. « Unless thy law had been my meditation, I had then perhaps perished in my abjection » ¹.

Tell me, dear brother, whenever it happened to you to neglect these exercises of the interior life, did you recognize in yourself the man of God, « *homo Dei* », that St. Paul desires each of us to be? « But thou, O man of God, fly these things and pursue justice, faith, charity, patience, mildness » ². And have you not similarly observed that your periods of fervour have synchronized with your efforts at greater persistence in Prayer? The exercises of daily prayer, beginning if possible with the dawn; the evening examination of conscience; the earnest preparation for weekly confession; the monthly day of recollection; the annual retreat: these exercises will keep your soul in an atmosphere of piety that will nourish it and that will fit you for the celebration of the holy Mysteries, for the recitation of the office,

¹ *Nisi quod lex tua meditatio mea est, tunc forte periissem tu humilitate mea.* — Ps. CXVIII. 92.

² I. Tim. VI. 11.

for the zealous and worthy discharge of all your functions in the ministry.

Such then is the first condition for perseverance : a condition that imposes itself on all of us without distinction. But there is a second one, of a more special character, which varies for different individuals.

If, unhappily, you should encounter anything that would be to you an occasion of falling, you must not hesitate, you must remove it. « And if thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off : it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into unquenchable fire. And if thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter lame into life everlasting, than having two feet to be cast into the hell of unquenchable fire ¹ ». And when the enemy who assails us threatens our chastity, let us never forget that our urgent duty is to flee from him. St. Augustine, who had so cruelly suffered from such attacks, warns us again and again in the course of his writings to use the only means which he, by sad experience, had

¹ *Et si scandalizaverit te manus tua, abscide illam... et si pes tuus te scandalizat, amputa illum... ; quod si oculus tuus scandalizat te, ejice eum ; bonum est tibi debilem... claudum... luscum introire in regnum Dei, quam duas manus... duos pedes... duos oculos habentem mitti in gehennam ignis.* — Mark, IX, 42-46.

found to avail : « Flee from the danger », he says, « if you desire to triumph » ¹. « I own that I am weak », says St. Jerome, « I will not attempt the combat because I fear defeat... But I fly lest I be vanquished » ². « Is there a man », again writes S. Augustine, « who remembering his own weakness, dares to take credit to himself for the preservation of his chastity ? » In a word, my dear Brothers, apply to your own selves the moral teaching that your experience of the confessional obliges you to apply to your penitents : « He that loveth danger shall perish in it » ⁴.

The danger for most of us lies not in open, voluntary occasions of grievous sin, but rather in certain conditions that conduce to lukewarmness, weariness and torpor. Hence it is of the first importance that we tear ourselves away with all our strength from the enervating influence of frivolity, idleness, indolence and dissipation. We must map out for ourselves a full life, keep up

¹ *Apprehende fugam, si vis invenire victoriam.* — S. Aug. Serm. 293. Migne, Opera S. Aug. T. V. Appendix.

² *Fateor imbecillitatem meam. Nolo spe pugnare victoriæ, ne perdam aliquando victoriam... Sed ideo fugio, ne vincar.* — S. Hieronymus, *Lib. contra Vigilant.*, n. 16.

³ *Qui est hominum, qui suam cogitans infirmitatem, audet viribus suis tribuere castitatem suam ?* — Conf. Lib. II, cap. VII.

⁴ *Qui amat periculum, in illo peribit.* — Eccl. III. 27.

our habits of study, be diligent in all our duties, and by earnest, regular forethought, plan out occupation for the spare moments of the day. We are told that one of the great secrets of household economy lies in the art of utilizing the fragments of food left over. Learn therefore to utilize what have been called « *les moments perdus* », those moments before and after work, little intervals without definite employment ; and you will probably be surprised at the rich return this simple plan will bring you in a week, a month, a year. I will not enlarge on this subject. Put it yourselves to the test of experience. I will merely recall to you St Paul's advice to Timothy : « Labor as a good soldier of Christ Jesus » ¹. We are on a field of battle : be therefore always in the breach : « For he also that striveth for the mastery, is not crowned except he strive lawfully » ².

The Retreat has made piety and fidelity to duty easy for you, by enabling you to intensify your fervour in Prayer, and by cutting off for the time all occasions of sin or of easy self-indulgence. It has moreover helped you positively by placing you once more under the

¹ *Labora sicut bonus miles Christi Jesu.* — II. Tim. II. 3.

² *Nam et qui certat in agone, non coronatur nisi legitime certaverit.* II Tim. II. 5.

inspiring influence of good example within these hallowed walls. What was it that used to make the accomplishment of our daily duty so light in our Seminary days, if not the unconscious stimulus we gave one another by what has been so rightly called « mutual edification » ?

You no longer walk side by side with your companions of the seminary, and your immediate neighbours in the ministry may not be always of the kind to inspire you with the greatest confidence, or set you the best example. Nevertheless you should not tread the wide avenues of toil in solitude, still less the hard pathways of sorrow : « A brother that is helped by his brother, is like a strong city » ¹. I know of course that you have companions, and that in their society you can find profitable pastime ; but the priest who has sacrificed home and family affections must have some one to turn to at certain times — above all when he is young — for the support of a really deep and warm friendship. He must have some friend to whom he can open his heart and speak of those hidden things which may not be disclosed to the first comer, nor yet be kept in his own breast. If you, dear

¹ *Frater qui adjuvatur a fratre, quasi civitas firma.* — Prov. XVIII, 19.

brother, have found this friend on your path through life — be he an equal of your own, or a man of riper years, experience and virtue, who has undertaken to direct your conscience — thank Divine Providence for sending him your way, and cling to him with a jealous care as you would to a most precious treasure. Yet, withal, my dear brothers — need I remind you of it ? — even the best friends are so powerless ! Be they ever so faithful, their help is yet so fleeting, and may so easily fail you ! « All human comfort is vain and short, » says the *Imitation of Christ* ¹. Therefore, far above all human affection and friendship, foster ever in your hearts, I implore you, a supreme affection and friendship for Him who « when all forsake will not leave you, nor suffer you to perish finally ². » To-morrow you will be once more back in your parishes. Let your first visit there be to the faithful Friend Who at your call a few days ago came down from Heaven into your hands, Whom you left enclosed in the tabernacle, and Who will never leave you as long as you will Him to remain with you.

¹ *Vanum est et breve omne humanum solatium* — Lib. III. cap. XVI.

² *Illum dilige, et amicum tibi retine, qui, omnibus recedentibus, te non relinquet nec patietur in fine perire.* — Ibid. Lib. II. cap. VII.

Oh, my dear Friends, why did our Divine Saviour not arrange, as Lutherans think He did, to be present in the Blessed Sacrament only at the moment of our receiving it ? Why does He rather make an abiding sojourn in our midst ? For the sake of the faithful generally, of course : and I most earnestly entreat you to leave your churches ever open to their devotion (always with due precautions to secure respect and safety for the Holy Place) ; but the vast majority of the faithful are lawfully detained elsewhere by their various duties in life ; and are not we ourselves the privileged ones who have leisure to adore ? Is it not we who hold the keys of the church and the tabernacle ? Are not we their responsible custodians ? and the appointed keepers of the little lamp which in our absence still speaks for us, nay, which seems ever to consume itself in our place before the God of the Eucharist ? I can never forget the bitter word I heard one day from a fellow-student at Brussels who had lost the faith : « If priests believed in the Real Presence », he said, « they would be oftener seen in the church than in frivolous company where their piety has nothing to gain ». Of course such taunts come naturally, alas ! from the conceited pharisee whose severity is exclusively for others. A humble, honest self-analysis will show us only

too plainly that our inconsistency in practice argues human weakness indeed, but certainly not any such sacrilegious hypocrisy as that. The reproach of the scoffer does nevertheless emphasize an all too frequent inconsistency in our lives — a tendency against which we should earnestly resolve to re-act. I will put the matter simply to you in this way : could you conceive without shame that a friend would condescend to visit you, not to ask for any favour, but solely to place himself at your disposal, to offer you his services gratuitously, and even his sympathy and support ; and that you, his host could be so unmindful of all that proffered kindness as to pass a whole day close by him in cold and silent indifference ? And yet — can we deny it ? — there are priests, who, once their morning mass is said, close the church doors after them and pay no further homage of adoration or thanksgiving to their God, nor till the next morning vouchsafe a single sign of remembrance to their Friend, their Brother, their Redeemer, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. Is it not humiliating to have to admit that we treat our supreme Friend, our best, our most faithful Friend, with less regard than we should have for an ordinary companion of our work or our amusements ? Or is it because He is more patient, more merciful, more divinely good, that

we in practice claim a sort of right to be more thoughtlessly ungrateful to Him.

I will now conclude this Conference — the last of a Retreat which I hope God has blessed for all. We inquired by what means you could hope to maintain around you an atmosphere like that which during these days of deeper recollection has fostered the expansion of your pious and generous sentiments. Be faithful to daily Prayer, we answered, and never neglect your daily examen of conscience. Keep up your pious habit of weekly confession and monthly recollection. Flee from all that is an avoidable occasion of sin to you, if ever an unhappy experience have taught you that in certain circumstances your virtue is in danger. Let diligence in your duties, in study, in parochial work, and order in the arrangement of your spare time, save you from that sort of aimless, ill-directed existence wherein so much strength and time are lost, or expended to no useful purpose. Encourage one another by mutual edification. May you be fortunate enough to find on your way a true friend, an enlightened director, who will help forward whole-heartedly the progress of your soul, and cooperate with you in your ministry. But above all, following the counsel of the *Imitation*, make of Our Lord Jesus Christ, present, living ever near you in the Blessed sacrament of the Eu-

charist, your faithful, best, and never-to-be-forgotten Friend.

When a pilgrim returns to his home he likes to take with him some visible souvenirs of his pilgrimage, and even to distribute these around him. Take away with you this definite remembrance of your Retreat of 1908 : Deplore any negligence in the past towards the God of the Eucharist ; and henceforth let no parishioner and no brother-priest be as dear to you as the amiable Jesus, Christ the Son of the Living God, your abiding guest in the tabernacle. Let the most holy among your parishioners, witnessing your devotion to Him, think oftener of Him, draw closer to Him, and gradually help you to form around the King of Kings a faithful body-guard which will bring down on you and your spiritual children those choice blessings which transform, and purify and work marvels among the faithful.

Need I remind you how religious indifference is spreading among the masses ? You recall the touching scene described in the sixth chapter of St. John, when Our Divine Lord promised to institute the Holy Eucharist. He has just announced to the apostles and to the crowds around Him that He Himself in His own flesh is the Bread of Life : « I am the living bread which came down from heaven » ¹. « If any man eat of

¹ *Ego sum panis vitae qui de coelo descendi.* — John, VI. 51.

this bread he shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world » ¹. Many of His disciples interpret this language in a purely material sense, and are scandalized. « This saying is hard », they murmur, « and who can hear it » ². Slowly they move away from the Master. Seeing them thus waver and withdraw, He is deeply moved. In a voice of mingled pity for the unbelieving, secret sorrow for the traitor who was soon to sell away His life, and searching tenderness for the chosen Twelve, He turns to these with the simple question : « Will you also go away » ? « And Simon Peter answered Him : Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that thou art the Christ, the Son of God » ³.

Dear fellow-workers in the mission of the Twelve, do you not hear the Master's voice in your own ears, from His retreat in the tabernacle : « Will you also go away ? » Patiently, untiringly, He awaits your answer : « Lord, to

¹ *Si quis manducaverit ex hoc pane, vivet in aeternum ; et panis, quem ego dabo, caro mea est pro mundi vita.* — *ibid.* 52.

² *Durus est hic sermo et quis potest eum audire ?* — *Ibid.* 61.

³ *Numquid et vos vultis abire ? Domine, ad quem ibimus ? Verba vitae aeternae habes. Et nos credidimus et cognovimus quia tu es Christus Filius Dei.* — *ibid.* 68-70.

whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that thou art the Christ, the Son of God. »

« *And* » -- as Saint John was afterwards to write in his Epistle — « *this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith* » ¹.

« Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ² ? »

He that believeth in the Son of God, hath the testimony of God in himself ³. »

¹ *Et hæc est victoria quæ vincit mundum, fides nostra.* — I. John, V. 4, 5.

² *Quis est qui vincit mundum, nisi qui credit quoniam Jesus est Filius Dei.* — *ibid.* 5.

³ *Qui credit in Filium Dei habet testimonium Dei in se.* — *ibid.* 10.

EPILOGUE.

Te Deum. — Renewal of Priestly Vows. —
Adieu.

EPILOGUE.

**Te Deum. — Renewal of Priestly Vows. —
Adieu.**

And now in taking leave of you, dear brothers, what more have I to say to you ? — You have spent these days here in deep recollection ; you have resolutely fixed your thoughts on your eternal interests ; you resolved to direct towards those eternal interests your whole personal conduct and your whole pastoral work : Humbly you have lamented your failings : submissively you have gone into the school of the Divine Master ; and with all your hearts you have promised Him that you will model your conduct, your thoughts and feelings, your whole life on Him. You have gone back in spirit to the day of your ordination, and you have realized again the twofold purpose of your existence : as mediators before the throne of God, and His ambassadors to humanity. Lastly, with a clear consciousness of the sublimity of your calling, and in full possession of the peace it offers you, you have noted the practical means of fostering within you as long as you live, those blessed dispositions of the priestly, apostolic soul.

It is now, therefore, the time to chant the *Te Deum* of thanksgiving, and to renew before the

Blessed Sacrament exposed for your adoration the vows you first formulated when, leaving the world, you entered the priesthood. Return then, dear brothers, full of joy and courage to labour in the vineyard which God's Providence has committed to your care. « Go, my beloved sons, consider carefully the sacerdotal office which you bear, and the responsibility that rests upon your shoulders : seek to live holy and religious lives, and to please the Almighty God, so that you may be worthy to obtain His grace : which may He, in His mercy, grant unto you » ¹.

With all the fervour of my soul, as a priest and pastor, I address that prayer to the Lord in your behalf. May He deign to accept your holy resolutions ! Let us place them under the protecting mantle of Our dear Mother, the Most Holy Virgin Mary.

O Blessed Mother, I cannot pronounce thy name here without a feeling of poignant regret ! We have, indeed, never opened one of the Discourses without invoking Thy aid. nor ended one without thanking Thee : but it was our wish to do more ; it was our wish to devote one of

¹ *Filii dilectissimi, diligenter considerate Ordinem per vos susceptum, ac onus humeris vestris impositum : studete sancte et religiose vivere, atque omnipotenti Deo placere, ut gratiam suam possitis acquirere : quam ipse vobis per suam misericordiam concedere dignetur. — De Ordinatis. Presb.*

our reunions *ex professo* to celebrating Thy greatness and the sovereign power of Thy intercession. But, limited by our time and by our programme, alike, we have not been able in this Retreat to carry out that desire. Vouchsafe, O Ever-Blessed Virgin, to provide us with many an opportunity of promoting Thy glory, and arm us with fortitude against Thy enemies : *Dignare me laudare te, Virgo sacrata, Da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos.*

Graciously receive to-day, we implore Thee, and present to Thy Divine Son, the offering of our humble service and the pious resolutions of our loyal, dear and devoted clergy. Show Thyself a Mother to us : that our prayers, presented by Thee, may find a welcome with Him who deigned to become Man for our sakes and drew from Thee the life that He gave for us :

*Monstra te esse matrem,
Sumat per te preces
Qui pro nobis natus
Tulit esse tuus.*

EXHORTATION

To the Catholic Clergy

OF

Our most Holy Father, Pius X

ON THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS PRIESTHOOD

SANCTISSIMI DOMINI NOSTRI
PII DIVINA PROVIDENTIA PAPÆ X
IN QUINQUAGESIMO NATALI SACERDOTII SUI
EXHORTATIO
AD CLERUM CATHOLICUM

PIUS PP. X.

DILECTI FILII

SALUTEM ET APOSTOLICAM BENEDICTIONEM.

Exordium. 1° *Pontificis cura de clero formando.*

Hærent animo penitus, suntque plena formidinis, quæ

EXHORTATION
TO THE CATHOLIC CLERGY
OF OUR MOST HOLY FATHER, PIUS X,
BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE, POPE,
ON THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS
PRIESTHOOD ¹.

PIUS X, POPE.

BELOVED SONS, HEALTH AND APOSTOLIC BLESSING,

Exordium. 1° *The Pope's Solicitude about the proper Formation of the Clergy.*

The words, full of weight and fearful import which

¹ By the kind permission of the publishers, Messrs Browne and Holan, Dublin, the Official English Version of the *Exhortatio* is here reproduced. The divisions and titles are those adopted by Monsieur l'abbé Mahieu, director of the Seminary of Bruges. — Beyaert, 1908.

gentium Apostolus ad Hebræos scribebat ¹ quum illos commonens de obedientiæ officio præpositis debitæ, gravissime affirmabat : *Ipsi enim pervigilant, quasi rationem pro animabus vestris reddituri.*

Hæc nimirum sententia si ad omnes pertinet, quotquot in Ecclesia præsunt, at maxime in Nos cadit, qui, licet impares, supremam in ea auctoritatem, Deo dante, obtinemus. Quare noctu atque interdium sollicitudine affecti, meditari atque eniti non intermittimus quæcumque ad incolumitatem faciant et incrementa dominici gregis.

Inter hæc unum præcipue Nos occupat : homines

¹ XIII, 17.

the Apostle of the Gentiles wrote to the Hebrews when admonishing them on the duty of obedience to their prelates, are impressed most deeply on Our mind : « For they watch, as being to render account of your souls ¹ » And though this sentence concerns all those who govern the Church, it falls most upon Us, who, though unequal to the responsibility, hold by God's gift the supreme authority in it. There in Our anxiety, night and day, we do not cease to think over and pursue with all earnestness whatever may tend to the safety and increase of the Lord's flock. There is one, however, among many things the special object of Our care : that those in Holy Orders should be such as they ought to be in the exercise of the ministry. For it is Our conviction that by this means chiefly We may hope for a healthy and prosperous condition of religion.

¹ Heb. XIII. 17.

sacri ordinis eos omnino esse, qui pro muneris officio esse debent. Persuasum enim habemus, hac maxime via de religionis statu bene esse lætiusque sperandum. Idcirco, statim ut Pontificatum inivimus, quamquam, universitatem cleri contuentibus, multiplices ejus laudes elucebant, tamen venerabiles fratres catholici orbis Episcopos impensissime hortandos censuimus, ut nihil constantius nihil efficacius agerent, quam ut Christum formarent in iis, qui formando in ceteris Christo rite destinantur. Sacrorum autem Antistitum quæ fuerint in hac re voluntates probe novimus. Novimus qua providentia, qua navitate in excolendo ad virtutem clero assidue connituntur : de quo illis non tam laudem impertivisse, quam gratias palam habuisse libet.

Hence, immediately on entering upon Our Pontificate, although when we regarded the whole body of the clergy their various merits were in clear light before Us, yet we deemed fit to exhort most strenuously Our venerable brothers, the Bishops of the Catholic Church, to perform no part of their duty with more untiring activity and thoroughness than the forming of Christ in those who are duly intended for the forming of Christ in others. We are fully assured of the goodwill of the venerable Bishops in this matter. We know the prudence, zeal, and assiduity with which they endeavour to train the clergy to virtue : for all of which it is not so much Our intention to bestow praises on them as to take this opportunity of publicly giving them thanks.

2^o Scopus exhortationis hujus.

At vero, quum ex hujusmodi Episcoporum curis iam plures e clero gratulamur cælestes concepisse ignes, unde gratiam Dei, ex impositione manuum presbyterii susceptam, vel resuscitarunt vel acuerunt ; tum adhuc conquerendum superest, alios quosdam per diversas regiones non ita se probare, ut in ipsos tamquam in speculum, prout dignum est, plebs christiana conciciens oculos, sumere possit quod imitetur.

Ad hos porro cor Nostrum per hasce litteras patere volumus ; videlicet ut cor patris, quod in conspectu ægrotantis filii anxia palpitat caritate. Hac igitur suadente, hortationibus Episcoporum hortationes addimus Nostras : quæ, quamvis eo spectent potissimum ut

2^{do} Scope of the Exhortation.

But though We rejoice that many of the clergy, through the care of the Bishops, have been fired with heavenly zeal, and have called to new life and keener activity the grace of God which they received from the imposition of hands at their priesthood ; yet We have still to deplore that others in the various lands do not so commend themselves that the faithful, who naturally turn their eyes to them as to the mirror of virtue, can take from them a pattern fit for imitation. To these We wish to lay open Our heart in these letters — the heart, indeed, of a father which beats with anxiety and love as he gazes on his son stricken down with disease. Moved by such love, We add Our exhortations to those of the Bishops ; and although Our main purpose is to recall the erring and the slothful to better

devios torpentesve ad meliora revocent, tamen etiam ceteris admoveant velimus incitamenta. Commonstramus iter quo quisque studiosius in dies contendat ut vere sit, qualem Apostolus nitide expressit, *homo Dei* ¹, justæque expectationi Ecclesiæ respondeat.

Nihil plane inauditum vobis aut cuiquam novum dicemus, sed quæ certe commeminisse omnes oportet : spem autem indit Deus, vocem Nostram fructum non exiguum esse habituram.

Id equidem flagitamus : *Renovamini... spiritu mentis vestræ, et induite novum hominem, qui secundum Deum creatus est in justitia, et sanctitate veritatis* ² :

¹ I Tim. VI, II.

² Ephes. IV, 23, 24.

things, yet We wish also that Our words should prove a stimulant to others. We point out the way by which each one may zealously endeavour day by day to be truly a « man of God » ¹ as the Apostle beautifully expresses it, and to fulfil the just expectation of the Church.

Although We shall say nothing new or before unheard, nothing but what it behoves all to remember, yet doth God give Us hope that Our words shall bear no scanty fruit. For this, indeed, We pray « and be renewed in the spirit of your mind : and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth » ². This will be the most beautiful

¹ I Tim. VI. II.

² Ephes IV. 23, 24.

eritque hoc a vobis in quinquagesimo sacerdotii Nostri natali pulcherrimum acceptissimumque munus. Quumque Nos, *in animo contrito et spiritu humilitatis* ¹, exactos in sacerdotio annos recogitabimus Deo ; quidquid humani dolendum sit, videbimur quodammodo expiare, admonendo vos et cohortando *ut ambuletis digne Deo per omnia placentes* ².

Qua tamen in hortatione, non vestras tantum utilitates tuebimur, sed communes etiam catholicarum gentium ; quum aliæ ab aliis dissociari nequaquam possint. Etenim non ejusmodi est sacerdos, qui bonus malusve uni sibi esse queat ; sed ejus ratio et habitus vitæ sane quantum habet consequentis effectus in populum. Sacer-

¹ Dan. III, 39.

² Coloss. I, 10.

and the most pleasing gift that you can make Us on the fiftieth anniversary of Our ordination to the priesthood. And when « in a contrite heart and humble spirit » ¹, we shall review before God those years passed in the ministry, We shall seem in a measure to atone for their shortcomings by admonishing and encouraging you « that you may walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing » ². It is not, however, to your profit solely that We look in this exhortation, but to that also of the whole Catholic Church : for one cannot be separated from the other. A priest is not one who may be good or bad for himself alone : his mode and habit of living has much consequent effect on the faithful.

¹ Dan. III, 39.

² Coloss. I, 10.

dos reapse bonus ubi est, quale ibi donum et quantum est !

I. ADHORTATIO AD SANCTITATEM.

A. Necessitas sanctitatis.

Hinc porro, dilecti filii, hortationis Nostræ exordium capimus, ut vos nimirum ad eam vitæ sanctimoniam, quam dignitatis gradus postulat, excitemus.

1° Sacerdos est pro aliis.

Quicumque enim sacerdotio potitur, eo non sibi tantum, sed aliis potitur : *Omnis namque Pontifex ex hominibus assumptus, pro hominibus constituitur in iis, quæ sunt ad Deum* ¹. Idipsum et Christus indicavit,

¹ Hebr. V, 1.

Where a priest is really good how inestimable the blessing to his people !

I. EXHORTATION TO SANCTITY.

A. Necessity of Sanctity.

Therefore, beloved Sons, We begin the exhortation by urging you to that holiness of life which the dignity to which you are raised demands.

1° The Priest is for others.

Whoever is graced with the priestly office is vested with it not for himself alone, but for others also : « For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to

qui ad significandum quo demum actio sacerdotum spectet, eos cum sale itemque cum luce comparatos voluit. Lux ergo mundi, sal terræ, sacerdos est.

Neminem sane fugit id præcipue fieri christiana veritate tradenda: at vero quem pariter fugiat, institutionem ejusmodi pro nihilo fere esse, si, quæ sacerdos verbo tradat, exemplo suo non comprobet? Qui audiunt, contumeliose ii quidem, sed non immerito objicient: *Confitentur se nosse Deum, factis autem negant* ¹; doctrinamque respuent, nec sacerdotis fruuntur luce. Quam ob rem ipse Christus, factus sacerdotum forma, re primum, mox verbis docuit: *Cæpit Jesus facere, et docere* ².

¹ Tit. I, 16.

² Act. I, 1.

God ¹. » And this is Christ's own teaching; for when He wished to illustrate the action of priests He compared them with salt and with light. The priest, then, is the light of the world, the salt of the earth. Everybody knows that he is so especially by teaching Christian truth; but who does not know that teaching of this kind is almost worthless if the priest does not confirm by his example that which he delivers by word! His hearers will object, with rude sarcasm indeed, but not undeservedly, « They profess that they know God, but in their works they deny Him » ²; and they will refuse the teaching and take no benefit from the light of the priest. Therefore Christ Himself, made the pattern of priests, first taught by deed, then by words: « Jesus

¹ Heb. V. 1.

² Tit. I. 16.

Item, sanctimonia posthabita, nihil admodum sacerdos sal terræ esse poterit; corruptum enim et contaminatum integritati minime aptum est conferendæ: unde autem sanctitas abest, ibi corruptionem inesse oportet. Quapropter Christus, eandem insistens similitudinem, sacerdotes tales sal infatuatum dicit, quod *ad nihilum valet ultra, nisi ut mittatur foras*, atque adeo *conculcetur ab hominibus* ¹.

2º Agit nomine Christi.

Quæ quidem eo apertius patent, quod sacerdotali munere haud nostro nos fungimur nomine, sed Christi Jesu. Sic nos, inquit Apostolus, *existimet homo ut*

¹ Matth. V, 13.

began to do and to teach » ¹. Further, when sanctity is neglected, the priest cannot be the salt of the earth; a thing corrupted and infected cannot contribute to soundness, and when sanctity is wanting there must be corruption. Hence Christ pressing home the same comparison calls such priests salt that has lost its savour, which « is good for nothing any more but to be cast out, and to be trodden on by men » ².

2º He acts in the Name of Christ.

All this is more clearly evident because we fulfil the priestly office not in our own name but in the name of Jesus Christ. « Let a man account of us, » says the

¹ Act. I. 1.

² Matth. V. 13.

ministros Christi et dispensatores mysteriorum Dei ¹ ; *pro Christo ergo legatione fungimur* ².

Hac nempe de causa Christus ipse, non ad servorum, sed ad amicorum numerum nos adscripsit : *Jam non dicam vos servos .. Vos autem dixi amicos : quia omnia quaecumque audiavi a patre meo, nota feci vobis... Elegi vos, et posui vos ut eatis, et fructum afferatis* ³.

Est igitur nobis persona Christi gerenda : legatio vero ab ipso data sic obeunda, ut quo ille intendit, eo nos pertingamus. Quoniam vero *idem velle idem nolle, ea demum firma amicitia est* ; tenemur, ut amici, hoc

¹ I Cor. IV, 1.

² II Cor. V, 20.

³ Joan. XV, 15, 16.

Apostle, « as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God » ¹. « For Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors » ². For this reason has Christ enrolled us not in the number of His servants but of His friends : « I will not call you servants... but I have called you friends : because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father I have made known to you... I have chosen you ; and have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit » ³. We, priests, therefore, must bear as representatives the person of Christ ; we must so discharge the embassy entrusted by Him to us, that as far as He wills, so far must we reach. And since to will and

¹ I Cor. IV. 1.

² 2 Cor. V. 20.

³ John XV. 15, 16.

sentire in nobis, quod et in Christo Jesu, qui est *sanctus, innocens, impollutus* ¹ : ut legati ab eo, debemus doctrinis ejus ac legi conciliare fidem hominum, easdem nimirum nos ipsi primum servantes : ut potestatis ejus participes ad animos vinculis culparum levandos, conari nos omni studio oportet ne illis implicemur. At maxime ut ministri ejus in præcellentissimo sacrificio, quod perenni virtute pro mundi vita innovatur, debemus ea animi conformatione uti, qua ille ad aram crucis seipsum obtulit hostiam immaculatam Deo. Nam si olim, in specie solummodo ac figura, tanta a sacerdotibus postulabatur sanctitas ; ecquid a nobis, quum victima est Christus ? *Quo non oportet igitur esse*

¹ Hebr. VII, 26.

not to will the same things is the sure and only sign of firm friendship, we are bound as friends to let this mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus, who is « holy, innocent, undefiled » ¹. Thus, then, as His ambassadors, we ought to conciliate the faith of men to His teachings and to His law, by first observing them ourselves ; and since as sharers in His power we raise souls from the chains of sin, it behoves us to strive with all zeal that we ourselves may not be involved in the same bonds.

But chiefly as His ministers in the most august Sacrifice, which is renewed with unfailing power for the life of the world, we are bound to observe that conformity of mind with Him Who offered Himself to God, an unspotted victim on the altar of the Cross. For if, in

¹ Heb. VII. 26.

puriores tali fruentem sacrificio ? quo solari radio non splendidiorem manum carnem hanc dividenter ? os quod igni spiritali repletur, linguam quæ tremendo nimis sanguine rubescit¹ ?

Perapte S. Carolus Borromæus, in orationibus ad clerum, sic instabat : « Si meminissemus, dilectissimi
« fratres, quanta et quam digna in manibus nostris
« posuerit Dominus Deus, quantam istiusmodi conside-
« ratio vim haberet ad nos impellendum ut vitam
« ecclesiasticis hominibus dignam duceremus ! Quid
« non posuit in manu mea Dominus, quando proprium
« Filium suum unigenitum, sibi coæternum et coæqua-
« lem, posuit ? In manu mea posuit thesauros suos

¹ S. Jo. Chrysost. hom. LXXXII in Matth., n. 5.

ancient times, in the days of mere semblance and figure, great sanctity was expected in the priests, is there anything, think you, required of us when Christ is the victim ? « Than what does it not behove him to be purer who has the ministry of such a sacrifice ? more lustrous than the solar ray should be the hand that divides this flesh, the mouth that is filled with spiritual fire, the tongue that is reddened with this most adorable blood »¹. St. Charles Borromeo in his sermons to the clergy most appropriately continues thus :—

« If we were to remember, most beloved brothers, the greatness and the dignity of the things which God has placed in our hands, how much force would the consideration have in urging us to lead a life worthy of ecclesiastics ! What hath the Lord not placed in my

¹ St. John Chrys., Hom. LXXXII to Matt., n. 5.

« omnes, sacramenta et gratias ; posuit animas, quibus
« illi nihil est carius, quas sibi ipsi prætulit in amore,
« quas sanguine suo redemit : in manu mea posuit
« cælum, quod et aperire et claudere ceteris possim....
« Quomodo ergo adeo ingratus esse potero tantæ digna-
« tionis et dilectionis, ut peccem contra ipsum ? ut illius
« honorem offendam ? ut hoc corpus, quod suum est,
« inquinem ? ut hanc dignitatem, hanc vitam, eius
« obsequio consecratam, maculem ? »

3º Cura Ecclesiæ.

Ad hanc ipsam vitæ sanctimoniam, de qua juvat paulo fusius dicere, magnis Ecclesia spectat perpetuisque curis.

Sacra idcirco Seminaria instituta : ubi, si litteris ac

hand, when He hath placed there His own only-begotten, equal, and co-eternal Son? In my hand hath He placed all His treasures, His sacraments and graces: He hath placed souls, His dearest possessions, whom in His love He preferred to Himself, whom He redeemed by His blood: in my hand He hath placed heaven, which I can open and shut to others... How then can I be so ungrateful to such condescension and love, as to sin against Him? as to offend against His honour? as to defile this body which is His? as to sully this dignity, this life consecrated to His service? »

3º The Church provides Means for his Sanctification.

For this same sanctity of life, about which We speak advisedly at so great length, the Church provides with great and unceasing care. For this ecclesiastical seminaries have been instituted in which while they who

doctrinis imbuendi sunt qui in spem cleri adolescent, at simul tamen præcipueque ad pietatem omnem a teneris annis sunt conformandi.

Subinde vero, dum ipsa candidatos diuturnis intervallis gradatim promovet, nusquam, ut mater sedula, hortationibus de sanctitate assequenda parcit. Jucunda quidem ea sunt ad recolendum.

Quum enim primo sacram militiam cooptavit, voluit nos ea rite profiteri : *Dominus pars hæreditatis meæ, et calicis mei : tu es, qui restitues hæreditatem meam mihi* ¹. Quibus, inquit Hieronymus, monetur clericus ut qui, *vel ipse pars Domini est, vel Dominum partem*

¹ Ps. XV, 5.

grow up with the promise of a vocation are trained in literature and science, they are at the same time and especially formed to all piety from their tender years. Later, when after long intervals she promotes the candidates step by step to the sacred ministry, like a careful mother she never ceases to exhort them to the attainment of sanctity. Pleasant, indeed, is the remembrance ! When first she admitted us into her sacred army she wished us duly to profess : « The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup : it is thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me » ¹. By these words, St. Jerome says, « the cleric is warned that he who is either himself a portion of the Lord, or who hath the Lord as his portion, should show himself forth as one who may abide in the Lord and in whom,

¹ Ps. XV. 5.

habet, talem se exhibeat, ut et ipse possideat Dominum, et possideatur a Domino ¹.

Subdiaconis accensendos ipsa quam graviter est allocuta ! *Iterum atque iterum considerare debetis attente quod onus hodie ultro appetitis ;... quod si hunc ordinem susceperitis, amplius non licebit a proposito resilire, sed Deo... perpetuo famulari, et castitatem, illo adjuvante, servare oportebit. Tum denique : Si usque nunc fuistis tardi ad ecclesiam, amodo debetis esse assidui : si usque nunc somnolenti, amodo vigiles : si usque nunc inhonesti, amodo casti... Videte cujus ministerium vobis traditur !*

Diaconatu porro augendis sic per Antistitem a Deo

¹ Ep. LII, ad Nepotianum, n. 5.

the Lord may make His abode » ¹. With what serious words she addressed those who were to be enrolled among the subdeacons : « You should again and again attentively consider the responsibility which you freely seek to assume to-day... for when you shall have received this order it will no longer be lawful to withdraw from your resolution, but it will be necessary to serve ever in God's household, and to preserve chastity by His aid ». And in fine : « If hitherto you have been slow in the service of the Church, henceforth it behoves you to be diligent ; if until now you have been inclined to sleep, from this time forth you must be watchful... if until now impure, from this time chaste... Regard whose ministry is given to you ! » Again, for those

¹ Epit. LII. ad Nepotianum, n. 5.

precata est : *Abundet in eis totius forma virtutis, auctoritas modesta, pudor constans, innocentiae puritas et spiritualis observantia disciplina. In moribus eorum praecepta tua fulgeant, ut suae castitatis exemplo imitationem sanctam plebs acquirat.*

Sed eo acrius movet commonitio initiandis sacerdotio facta : *Cum magno timore ad tantum gradum ascendendum est, ac providendum ut caelestis sapientia, probi mores et diuturna justitiae observatio ad id electos commendet... Sit odor vitae vestrae delectamentum Ecclesiae Christi, ut praedicatione atque exemplo aedificetis domum id est familiam Dei.* Maximeque omnium urget illud gravissime additum : *Imitamini quod tractatis* : quod profecto cum Pauli praecepto congruit : *ut exhi-*

who were to be promoted to the diaconate, thus did she through the Bishop beseech of God « that the perfection of every virtue may abound in them, restrained authority, firm modesty, the purity of innocence, and reverence for spiritual teaching. In their morals may Thy precepts shine forth, that from the pattern of their chastity the people may obtain a holy example ». But the admonition given to those who were to be initiated into the priesthood moves Us more vehemently still : « With great fear must the ascent be made to so great a degree, and care must be taken that heavenly wisdom, upright morals, and a long-continued observance of all righteousness should commend those who are elected to it... May the fragrance of your life be a delight to the Church of Christ, and may you build up the house, that is the family of God, by your preaching and example ». Most of all do those most weighty words

beamus omnem hominem perfectum in Christo Jesu ¹.

4^o Doctrina SS. Patrum.

Talis igitur quum sit mens Ecclesiæ de sacerdotum vita, mirum nemini esse possit, quod sancti Patres ac Doctores omnes ita de ea re consentiant, ut illos fere nimios quis arbitretur : quos tamen si prudenter æstimemus, nihil eos nisi apprime verum rectumque docuisse judicabimus.

Eorum porro sententia hæc summatim est. Tantum scilicet inter sacerdotem et quemlibet probum virum intercedere debet discriminis, quantum inter cælum et terram : ob eamque causam, virtuti sacerdotali caven-

¹ Coloss. I, 28.

that are added impress us : « Imitate that which you have in hands » ; assuredly in keeping with the teaching of St. Paul, « that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus » ¹.

4^o The Fathers of the Church inculcate Holiness.

Since, then, such is the mind of the Church about the life of the priest, it cannot appear strange that the holy Fathers and Doctors all insist in such accord on this matter that one would think their requirements almost excessive ; yet, if we prudently weigh them we shall judge that they have taught nothing except what is quite true and right. Now, this is the summary of their teaching. There ought to be as great a difference between the priest and a merely upright layman, as

¹ Coloss. I. 28.

dum non solum ne gravioribus criminibus sit affinis, sed ne minimis quidem.

In quo virorum tam venerabilium judicio Tridentina Synodus stetit, quum monuit clericos ut fugerent *levia etiam delicta, quæ in ipsis maxima essent* ¹ : maxima scilicet, non re ipsa, sed respectu peccantis, in quem, potiore jure quam in templorum ædificia, illud convenit : *Domum tuam decet sanctitudo* ².

B. In quo consistat sanctitas sacerdotis.

Jam sanctitas ejusmodi, qua sacerdotem carere sit nefas, videndum est in quo sit ponenda : id enim si

¹ Sess. XXII, *De reform.*, c. I.

² Ps. XCII, 5.

between heaven and earth : for this reason that the virtue of the priest ought to be guarded from contact not only with more serious sins, but even with the smallest. And on this judgment of men so venerable, the Council of Trent took its stand when it warned clerics to avoid « even light faults, for in them these would be very grave » ¹ ; very grave indeed, not in the matter itself, but having regard to the person of the sinner, to whom the Psalmist's words are more suitably applied than the structures of temples. « Holiness becometh thy house ».

B. In what does Sacerdotal Sanctity Consist ?

We have now to see in what consists this sanctity which it is criminal for a priest to neglect : for if

¹ Sess. XXII. *de Reform.*, c. I.

quis ignoret vel præpostere accipiat, magno certe in discrimine versatur.

1º Præprimis in virtutibus quibus perficitur ipse.

Equidem sunt qui putent, quin etiam profiteantur, sacerdotis laudem in eo collocandam omnino esse, ut sese aliorum utilitatibus totum impendat : quamobrem, dimissâ fere illarum cura virtutum, quibus homo perficitur ipse (eas ideo vocitant *passivas*) aiunt vim omnem atque studium esse conferenda ut *activas* virtutes quis excolat exerceatque.

Hæc sane doctrina mirum quantum fallaciæ habet atque exitii. De ea Decessor noster fel. rec. sic pro sua sapientia edixit ¹ : « Christianas... virtutes, alias

¹ Ep. *Testem benevolentia*, ad Archlep. Baltimor., 22 jan. 1899.

anyone does not know it, or understands it perversely, assuredly such a one is in grave danger.

1º First of all, in his own Personal Virtues.

There are some indeed who think, nay, who even profess, that the merit of a priest is to be placed in this, that he gives himself up entirely for the benefit of others; and hence almost disregarding those virtues by which the man himself is perfected (those which they are accustomed to designate *passive*), they say that all his effort and zeal should be directed to cultivating and exercising the *active* virtues. Marvellous is it how much fallacy and mischief is in this teaching. Concerning it, Our Predecessor of happy memory thus declared in his wisdom : —

« That the Christian virtues are suited, some to one time, others to another, he only will say who is not

« temporibus aliis accommodatas esse, is solum velit,
 « qui Apostoli verba non meminerit : *Quos præscivit,*
 « *et prædestinavit conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui* ¹.
 « Magister et exemplar sanctitatis omnis Christus est ;
 « ad cujus regulam aptari omnes necesse est, quotquot
 « avent beatorum sedibus inseri. Jamvero haud mutatur
 « Christus progredientibus sæculis, sed idem *heri, et*
 « *hodie : ipse et in sæcula* ². Ad omnium igitur ætatum
 « homines pertinet illud : *Discite a me, quia mitis sum,*
 « *et humilis corde* ³ ; nulloque non tempore Christus
 « se nobis exhibet *factum obedientem usque ad mor-*

¹ Rom. VIII, 29.

² Hebr. XIII, 8.

³ Matth. XI, 29.

mindful of the words of the Apostle : « For whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son » ¹. Christ is the teacher and the pattern of all holiness : all who desire to be admitted to the regions of the blest must conform to His rule. Now, Christ is unchanged with the progress of the ages. He is the same, « yesterday and to-day, and the same for ever » ². Therefore, do these words concern men in every age : « Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart » ³ ; nor is there any time in which Christ does not present Himself to us « becoming obedient even unto death » ⁴ ; and in every age these

¹ Rom. VIII. 29.

² Heb. XIII. 8.

³ Matt. XI. 29.

⁴ Philipp. II. 8.

« *tem* ¹ ; valetque quavis ætate Apostoli sententia :
 « *Qui... sunt Christi, carnem suam crucifixerunt cum*
 « *vitiis et concupiscentiis* » ².

Quæ documenta si quidem spectant unumquemque fidelium, propius tamen ad sacerdotes attinent : ipsique præ ceteris dicta sibi habeant quæ idem Decessor Noster apostolico ardore subiecit : « Quas utinam virtutes
 « multo nunc plures sic colerent, ut homines sanctissimi
 « præteritorum temporum ! qui demissione animi, obedientia, abstinence, *potentes fuerunt opere et sermone*,
 « emolumento maximo, nedum religiosæ rei, sed publicæ ac civilis ».

¹ Philipp. II, 8.

² Gal. V, 24.

words of the Apostle hold good : « They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences » ¹.

And if these lessons regard each of the faithful, much more closely still do they concern priests : let the latter consider as addressed to them before all others the words which Our same Predecessor added with apostolic zeal : « Would that many more men would now cherish those virtues like the most holy men of past times ! They, by humility of spirit, by obedience, by abstinence were *powerful in work and word*, to the supreme advantage not only of religion, but also of the public and civil good ». And here it may not be inappropriate

¹ Gal. V. 24. (Letters. Testem. benevolentiae, to the Archbishop of Baltimore, 22 Jan., 1899).

Ubi animadvertere non abs re fuerit, Pontificem prudentissimum jure optimo singularem abstinentiæ mentionem intulisse, quam evangelico verbo dicimus, abnegationem sui. Quippe hoc præsertim capite, dilecti filii, robur et virtus et fructus omnis sacerdotalis muneris continetur : hoc neglecto, exoritur quidquid in moribus sacerdotis possit oculos animosque fidelium offendere. Nam si turpis lucri gratia quis agat, si negotiis sæculi se involvat, si primos appetat accubitus ceterosque despiciat, si carni et sanguini acquiescat, si quærat hominibus placere, si fidat persuasibilibus humanæ sapientiæ verbis ; hæc omnia inde fluunt, quod Christi mandatum negligit conditionemque respuit ab ipso latam : *Si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum* ¹.

¹ Matth. XVI, 24.

to remark that the most prudent Pontiff very rightly made especial mention of abstinence, which in the words of the Gospel we call self-denial. Indeed, under this head especially, beloved Sons, is found the strength, the power, and the fruit of all the priestly office : through neglect of this arises whatever in the morals of the priest can offend the eyes and the souls of the faithful. For if any priest acts for the sake of filthy lucre, if he occupies himself with worldly cares, if he seeks for the first place and contemns others, if he yields to flesh and blood, if he strives to please men, if he trusts in the persuasive words of human wisdom, all flow from this that he neglects the Commandment of Christ, and spurns the condition laid down by Him : « If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself » ¹.

¹ Matt. XVI, 24.

2° Ne tamen negligat curam aliorum.

Ista Nos quum adeo inculcamus, illud nihilo minus sacerdotem admonemus, non sibi demum soli vivendum sancte : ipse enimvero est operarius, quem Christus *exiit... conducere in vineam suam* ¹. Ejus igitur est fallaces herbas evellere, serere utiles, irrigare, tueri ne inimicus homo supersemimet zizania. Cavendum propterea sacerdoti ne, inconsulto quodam intimæ perfectionis studio adductus, quidquam prætereat de muneris partibus quæ in aliorum bonum conducant. Cujusmodi sunt verbum Dei nuntiare, confessiones rite excipere, adesse infirmis præsertim morituris, ignaros fidei erudire, solari mœrentes, reducere errantes, usquequaque imitari Chris-

¹ Matth. XX, 1.

2° Yet he must not neglect the Care of Others.

While We so earnestly enforce this lesson, We also admonish the priest that he must live the sanctified life not for himself alone : for he is the labourer whom Christ « went out... to hire into His vineyard » ¹. It is, therefore, his work to pull up weeds, to sow useful plants, to water, to watch lest the enemy should sow tares. Hence the priest must beware lest through some ill-advised zeal for personal perfection, he should omit any of those parts of a priest's work which tend to the good of others. Of this kind are preaching the Word of God, duly hearing confessions, assisting the sick, especially the dying, instructing the ignorant in the faith, comforting those who are in affliction, leading back the wandering sheep, in every way imitating Christ,

¹ Matt. XX. 1.

tum : *Qui pertransiit benefaciendo et sanando omnes oppressos a diabolo* ¹.

3° *Per sanctitatem propriam procurabit bonum aliorum.*

Inter hæc vero insigne Pauli monitum sit mente defixum : *Neque qui plantat est aliquid, neque qui rigat : sed, qui incrementum dat, Deus* ². Liceat quidem euntes et flentes mittere semina ; liceat ea labore multo fovere : sed ut germinant edantque optatos fructus, id nempe unius Dei est ejusque præpotentis auxilii.

Hoc accedit magnopere considerandum, nihil præterea

¹ Act. X, 38.

² I Cor. III, 7.

« Who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil » ¹.

3° *By his own Personal Sanctity he will procure the Good of Others.*

But amidst all these labours let the memorable warning of St. Paul be set before your minds : « Neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth ; but God that giveth the increase » ². You may, indeed, going and weeping, cast the seeds ; you may foster them with much toil, but it is God alone and His all-powerful help that will make them grow and produce the desired fruit. There follows this further grave consideration that since men are merely the instruments

¹ Acts. X. 38.

² I Cor. III. 7.

esse homines nisi instrumenta, quibus ad animorum salutem utitur Deus ; ea oportere idcirco ut apta sint quæ a Deo tracentur. Qua sane ratione ?

Num ullâ putamus vel insita vel parta studio præstantia moveri Deum ut opem adhibeat nostram ad suæ gloriæ amplitudinem ? Nequaquam : scriptum est enim : *Quæ stulla sunt mundi elegit Deus, ut confundat sapientes : et infirma mundi elegit Deus, ut confirmat fortia : et ignobilia mundi, et contemptibilia elegit Deus, et ea quæ non sunt, ut ea quæ sunt destrueret* ¹.

Unum nimirum est quod hominem cum Deo jungat, unum quod gratum efficiat, atque non indi-

¹ I Cor. I, 27, 28.

which God uses for the salvation of souls, it is necessary that they be suitable instruments for God to handle. And why is this ? Do we think that God is moved by any excellence whether inborn or begotten of our endeavours to employ our help for the spread of His glory ? By no means, for it is written : « The foolish things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the wise : and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the strong : and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He might bring to nought things that are » ¹. There is one thing, however, that unites man with God, one thing that makes man an acceptable and not unworthy assistant to His mercy, sanctity of life and

¹ I Cor. I. 27. 28.

gnum ejus misericordiæ administrum : vitæ morumque sanctimonia.

¶ Hæc, quæ demum est supereminens Jesu Christi scientia, sacerdoti si desit, desunt ei omnia. Nam, ab ea disjunctæ, ipsa exquisitæ doctrinæ copia (quam Nosmetipsi nitimur in clero provehere), ipsaque agendi dexteritas et sollertia, etiamsi emolumenti aliquid vel Ecclesiæ vel singulis afferre possint, non raro tamen detrimenti iisdem sunt flebilis causa.

Sanctimonia vero qui ornetur et affluat, is quam multa possit, vel infimus, mirifice salutaria in populo Dei aggredi et perficere, complura ex omni ætate testimonia loquuntur : præclare, non remotâ memoria, Joannes Bapt. Vianney, animarum in exemplum curator, cui honores Cælitum Beatorum Nosmet decrevisse lætamur.

morals. If this, which is, in fine, the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, be wanting in the priest, he is lacking in everything.

For, wealth of refined learning, which We Ourselves endeavour to promote among the clergy, even skill and adroitness in their work, if separated from this, although they may bring some benefit to the Church or to the individual, are most frequently the lamentable cause of loss to both. But abundant testimonials from every age declare that he who is graced and enriched with holiness, though he be the lowliest, can attempt and accomplish many wonderful and salutary things for the people of God : a renowned example of no distant memory is John Baptist Vianney, a faithful guardian of souls, to whom it has been Our own joyful privilege to decree the honours of the Blessed in Heaven. Sanctity alone makes us what the divine vocation demands :

Sanctitas una nos efficit, quales vocatio divina exposcit : homines videlicet mundo crucifixos, et quibus mundus ipse sit crucifixus ; homines in novitate vitæ ambulantes, qui, ut Paulus monet ¹, *in laboribus, in vigiliis, in jejuniis, in castitate, in scientia, in longanimitate, in suavitate, in Spiritu Sancto, in caritate non ficta, in verbo veritatis* seipsos exhibeant ut ministros Dei ; qui unice in cælestia tendant, et alios eodem adducere omni ope contendant.

II. MEDIA ACQUIRENDI SANCTITATEM.

A. Oratio.

Quoniam vero, ut nemo unus ignorat, vitæ sanctitas

¹ II Cor. VI, 5 et seqq.

men crucified to the world, and to whom the world itself is crucified ; men walking in newness of life, who, as St. Paul teaches, exhibit themselves as the ministers of God « in labours, in watchings, in fastings, in chastity, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in sweetness, in the Holy Ghost, in charity unfeigned, in the word of truth » ; who strive only after heavenly things, and endeavour by every means to lead others by the same path.

II. MEANS OF ACQUIRING SANCTITY.

A. Prayer.

But since sanctity of life, as everyone knows, is the fruit of our will in as far as that is strengthened by the assistance of divine grace, God has abundantly provided

eatenus fructus est voluntatis nostræ, quod hæc gratiæ subsidio roboretur a Deo, abunde nobis Deus ipse providit, ne gratiæ munere, si velimus, ullo tempore careamus ; idque in primis assequimur studio precandi.

1^o *Necessitas orationis.*

Sane precationem inter et sanctimoniam is necessario intercedit usus, ut altera esse sine altera nullo modo possit.

Quocirca consentanea omnino veritati est ea sententia Chrysostomi : *Arbitror cunctis esse manifestum, quod simpliciter impossibile sit absque precationis præsidio cum virtute degere* ¹ : acuteque Augustinus con-

¹ De precatione, orat. I.

for us that we may never, at any time, lack the gift of grace if we desire it ; we obtain it chiefly by assiduity in prayer.

1^o *Necessity of Prayer.*

In effect, there is this inevitable connexion between prayer and holiness that one cannot at all exist without the other. Hence the opinion of St. Chrysostom is altogether at one with truth : « I deem it to be manifest to all that it is simply impossible to continue in virtue without the protection of prayer » ¹ ; And St. Augustine, with pointed intelligence, concluded, « He in truth knows how to live rightly, who knows how to pray rightly » ². Christ Himself convinces us of these

¹ *De precatione. orat. I.*

² Hom. iv. ex 50.

cluserit : *Vere novit recte vivere, qui recte novit orare*¹.

Quæ nobis documenta Christus ipse et crebra hortatione et maxime exemplo suo firmitus persuasit. Nempe orandi causâ vel in deserta secedebat, vel montes subibat solus ; noctes solidas totus in eo exigebat ; templum frequenter adibat ; quin etiam, stipantibus turbis, ipse erectis in cælum oculis palam orabat ; denique suffixus cruci, medios inter mortis dolores, cum clamore valido et lacrimis supplicavit Patri.

Hoc igitur certum ratumque habeamus, sacerdotem, ut gradum officiumque digne sustineat suum, precandi studio eximie deditum esse oportere.

Sæpius quidem dolendum quod ipse ex consuetudine

¹ Hom. IV ex 50.

teachings by His frequent exhortations and still more by His example. It is for the sake of prayer that He was wont to retire into the desert, or to go up into the mountains alone ; in prayer He used to spend whole nights ; for prayer He frequently entered the temple ; nay, often when surrounded by the multitudes, with His eyes raised to heaven He prayed in public ; in fine, upon the Cross, amidst the pangs of death, He besought the Father with a strong cry and tears.

Let us hold this as a certain and established truth, that the priest, in order to maintain worthily his station and office, must be in an uncommon degree devoted to earnest prayer. Too often, indeed, is it to be lamented that he prays rather from custom than with fervour of spirit, that he listlessly at the appointed hours recites the psalms, or adds a few supplications, and is no further mindful to allow any part of the day to com-

potius id faciat quam ex animi ardore ; qui statis horis oscitanter psallat vel pauculas interserat preces, nec deinde ullam de die partem memor tribuat alloquendo Deo, pie sursum adspirans.

Sed enim sacerdos multo impensius ceteris paruisse debet Christi præcepto : *Oportet semper orare* ¹ ; cui inhærens Paulus tantopere suadebat : *Orationi instate, vigilantes in ea in gratiarum actione* ² : *Sine intermissione orate* ³.

Animo quippe sanctimonix propriæ æque ac salutis alienæ cupido quam multæ per diem sese dant occasiones ut in Deum feratur ! Angores intimi, tentatio-

¹ Luc, XVIII, 1.

² Coloss. IV. 2.

³ I Thess. V. 17.

munion with God, in piety aspiring heavenwards. But the priest, very much more than others, is bound to obey the teaching of Christ, « that we ought always to pray » ¹ ; following in the same footsteps, St. Paul most earnestly counselled, « be instant in prayer, watching in it in thanksgiving » ² ; « pray without ceasing » ³. How many occasions present themselves daily to the soul desirous of its own sanctification and of the salvation of others, to raise itself to God ! Inward anxieties, the strength and tenacity of temptations, the need of virtues, the slackness and fruitlessness of one's labours, the frequently recurring offences and negligences, in fine, fear of the divine judgments : all these strongly urge us to

¹ Luke. XVIII. 1.

² Coloss. IV. 2.

³ I Thess. V. 17.

cry out unto num vis ac pertinacia, virtutum incopia, remissio ac sterilitas operum, offensiones et negligentiae creberrimæ, timor demum ad judicia divina ; hæc omnia valde incitant ut ploremus coram Domino, ac, præter impetratam opem, bonis ad ipsum meritis facile ditecamus. Neque nostrâ tantummodo ploremus causa oportet. In ea, quæ latius ubique funditur, scelerum coluvione, nobis vel maxime imploranda exorandaque est divina clementia ; nobis instandum apud Christum, sub mirabili Sacramento omnis gratiæ benignissime prodigum : *Parce, Domine, parce populo tuo.*

2º Meditatio quotidiana.

Illud in hac parte caput est, ut æternarum rerum meditationi certum aliquod spatium quotidie concedatur.

the Lord ; and thus besides obtaining the help we seek we may easily grow rich by meritorious acts in addition. Nor must we only implore for our own cause. In this filthy deluge of crime, which overflows on all sides, we must especially implore and beseech the divine clemency ; we must earnestly beg of Christ in the adorable Sacrament, Who is most bounteously lavish of all grace, « Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people ».

2º Daily Meditation.

In this matter of prayer, it is of primary importance that a certain space be allowed daily to meditation on eternal things. No priest can omit this without a serious display of negligence, and without grave loss to his soul.

Nemo est sacerdos qui possit hoc sine gravi incuriæ nota et animæ detrimento prætermittere.

Utilitas.

Ad Eugenium III, sibi quondam alumnum, tunc vero romanum Pontificem, Bernardus Abbas sanctissimus scribens, eum libere obnixque admonebat, ne unquam a quotidiana divinorum meditatione vacaret, nulla admissa excusatione curarum, quas multas et maximas supremus habet apostolatus. Id autem se jure exposcere contendebat, utilitates ejusdem exercitationis ita enumerans prudentissime : *Fontem suum, id est mentem, de qua oritur, purificat consideratio. Deinde regit affectus, dirigit actus, corrigit excessus, componit mores, vitam honestat et ordinat ; postremo divinarum*

a) Its Utility.

The Abbot St. Bernard, writing to his former pupil, Eugene III, then Roman Pontiff, frankly and strenuously cautioned him never to relax from the daily meditation on divine truths, and not to permit the cares, though many and very great, of the Supreme Apostolate to stand as an excuse for remissness. Then, duly proceeding to expound, he enumerated the advantages of this exercise with consummate prudence : « Meditation purifies the fountain from which it arises, that is the mind. It governs the affections ; it directs the actions ; it corrects excesses ; it regulates morals ; it graces and orders life ; in fine, it confers the knowledge of divine as well as of human things. It is meditation that clarifies confused things, that brings together things that are badly connected, that collects scattered things, that searches into secret things, that

pariter et humanarum rerum scientiam confert. Hæc est quæ confusa disternat, hiantia cogit, sparsa colligit, secreta rimatur, vera vestigat, verisimilia examinat, ficta et fucata explorat. Hæc est quæ agenda præordinat, acta recogitat, ut nihil in mente resideat aut incorrectum aut correctione egens. Hæc est quæ in prosperis adversa præsentit, in adversis quasi non sentit ; quorum alterum fortitudinis, alterum prudentiæ est ¹.

Necessitas.

Quæ quidem magnarum utilitatem summa, quas meditatio parere est nata, nos item docet atque admo-

¹ *De Consid.*, L. I, c. 7.

discovers true things, examines likely things, puts to the proof mere inventions and counterfeits. Meditation arranges beforehand the things that are to be done, and recalls the things that have been done, so that nothing incorrect, nothing that needs amendment may remain in the soul. It chastens the mind with the thought of reverses amidst prosperity ; in adversity it does not feel the rod : in the latter case it inculcates fortitude, in the former prudence » ¹. Now, this summary of the great advantages which it has been found to produce, shows and instructs us how meditation is not only in every way salutary but very necessary.

b) Its Necessity.

For although the various functions of the priest are august and full of reverence, yet it happens through

¹ *De Consideratione*, l. I. c. 7.

net, quam sit illa, non modo in omnem partem salutaris, sed admodum necessaria.

Quamvis enim varia sacerdotii munia augusta sint et plena venerationis, usu tamen frequentiore fit ut ipsa tractantes non ea plane qua par est religione perpendant. Hinc, sensim defervescente animo, facilis gressus ad socordiam, atque adeo ad fastidium rerum sacerdotiarum.

Accedit, quod sacerdotem quotidiana consuetudine versari necesse sit quasi *in medio nationis pravae* ; ut sæpe, in pastoralis ipsa caritatis perfunctione, sit sibi pertimescendum ne lateant inferni anguis insidiæ. Quid, quod tam est proclive, de mundano pulvere etiam religiosa corda sordescere ? Apparet igitur quæ et quanta urgeat necessitas ad æternorum con-

familiar custom that those engaged in them do not clearly esteem them as true religion requires. Hence, while imperceptibly the heart grows cold, the descent is easily made to tepidity, and then to weariness of things that are most sacred. Add that the priest is necessarily engaged in his daily work, as it were, in the midst of a perverse people, so that often in the very exercise of pastoral charity he has to fear the hidden snares of the infernal serpent. What shall be said when it is so easy for even religious hearts to be sullied with the dust of the world ? It is evident, then, how true and how great a necessity impels us to return daily to the contemplation of eternal truths, that our mind and will thereby regaining strength may be fortified against seduction. Moreover, it behoves the priest to be equipped with a certain power of soaring up and mounting into heavenly regions, as being one

templationem quotidie redeundi, ut adversus illecebras mens et voluntas, renovato subinde robore, obfirmentur.

Præterea expedit sacerdoti quadam instrui facilitate assurgendi nitendique in cælestia ; qui cælestia sapere, eloqui, suadere omnino debet ; qui sic debet vitam suam omnem supra humana instituere, ut, quidquid pro sacro munere agit, secundum Deum agat, instinctu ductuque fidei. Jamvero hunc animi habitum, hanc veluti nativam cum Deo conjunctionem efficit maxime ac tuetur quotidianæ meditationis præsidium ; id quod prudenti cuique tam perspicuum est, ut nihil opus sit longius persequi.

Quarum rerum confirmationem petere, licet, sane tristem, ex eorum vita sacerdotum, qui divinorum

who must know, speak of, persuade of heavenly things ; and hence he ought so to order his whole life above mere human things, that whatsoever he does in his sacred functions he may do agreeably to God, under the instinct and guidance of faith. That the assistance of daily meditation most of all induces and preserves this habit of mind, this, as it were, natural union with God, is so evident to every thinking person that it is not necessary to pursue this point further.

A confirmation, truly a sad one, may be found in the life of those priests who either make light of meditation or openly despise it. There you may see men in whom the *sense of Christ*, that inestimable blessing, has grown feeble — wholly given to things of earth, pursuing vanities, engaging in the most holy offices with negligence, with coldness, perhaps unworthily. At one time, while the grace of the sacerdotal unction

meditationem vel parvi pendunt vel plane fastidiunt. Videas enim homines, in quibus *sensus Christi*, illud tam præstabile bonum, oblanguit; totos ad terrena conversos, vana consecretantes, leviora effluentes; sacrosancta obeuntes remisse, gelide, fortasse indigne. Jampridem ipsi, unctionis sacerdotalis recenti charismate perfusi, diligenter parabant ad psallendum animum, ne perinde essent ac qui tentant Deum; opportuna quærebant tempora locaque a strepitu remotiora; divina scrutari sensa studebant; laudabant, gemebant, exultabant, spiritum effundebant cum Psalte. Nunc vero, quantum mutati ab illis sunt!...

Itemque vix quidquam in ipsis residet de alacri ea pietate quam spirabant erga divina mysteria. Quam dilecta erant olim tabernacula illa! gestiebat animus

was still fresh upon them, they were wont with diligence to prepare the soul for praise, lest they should be as those who tempt God; they used to seek times and places removed from the din; they strove to hear and understand the divine whisperings in their heart; they offered praises, groans, rejoicings of the spirit, with the Psalmist. But now, how changed are they from what they were! And so, almost nothing remains in them of that ready piety which they once exhaled towards the divine mysteries. How beloved were those tabernacles of old! Their soul then yearned to be round about the table of the Lord, and to invite others and bring others to it. Before Mass what holiness, what prayers of the panting soul! Then in the sacred act itself how great was the reverence! What complete beauty in the august ceremonies! What thanksgiving was poured out from the inmost heart! And happily the blessed odour of Christ flowed upon the people! « Call to mind, » We beseech

adesse in circuitu mensæ Domini, et alios ad eam atque alios advocare pios. Ante sacrum quæ mundities, quæ preces desiderantis animæ ! tum in ipso agendo quanta erat reverentia, augustis cæremoniis decore suo integris ; quam effusæ ex præcordiis gratiæ : feliciterque manabat in populum bonus odor Christi !... — *Rememoramini*, obsecramus, dilecti filii, *rememoramini... pristinos dies* ¹ : tunc nempe calebat anima, sanctæ meditationis studio enutrita.

In his autem ipsis, qui *recogitare corde* ² gravantur vel negligunt, non desunt sane qui consequentem animi sui egestatem non dissimulent, excusentque, id causæ

¹ Hebr. X, 32.

² Jerem. XII, 11.

you, beloved Sons, « call to mind the former days ; » ¹ for then the soul was warm, nourished by the exercise of holy meditation.

But amongst those who regard it as a burden, or who neglect « to consider in the heart » ², there are some who do not disguise from themselves the consequent starvation of the soul, but excuse it on the plea that they are occupied wholly in the turmoil of the ministry to the manifold advantage of others. Wretchedly do they deceive themselves. For, not being accustomed to speak with God, when they speak of Him to men or impart the counsels of the Christian life, they are altogether wanting in the divine breath, so that the word of the Gospel seems to be almost dead in them. Their voice, gifted with whatever merit in prudence or

¹ Heb. X. 32.

² Jer. XII. 11.

obtendentes, se totos agitationi ministerii dedidisse, in multiplicem aliorum utilitatem.

Verum falluntur misere.

Nec enim assueti cum Deo colloqui, quum de eo ad homines dicunt vel consilia christianæ vitæ impertiunt. prorsus carent divino afflatu ; ut evangelicum verbum videatur in ipsis fere intermortuum. Vox eorum, quantavis prudentiæ vel facundiæ laude clarescat, vocem minime reddit Pastoris boni, quam oves salutariter audiant : strepit enim diffluitque inanis, atque interdum damnosi fecunda exempli, non sine religionis dedecore et offensione bonorum.

Nec dissimiliter fit in ceteris partibus actuosæ vitæ : quippe vel nullus inde solidæ utilitatis proventus, vel brevis horæ, consequitur, imbre deficiente cælesti,

eloquence you please, echoes not at all the voice of the Good Shepherd which the sheep hearken to unto their salvation : it is an empty sound, a flowing vanity, sometimes even fruitful in pernicious example to the discredit of religion and the scandal of the good. Nor is it otherwise in the other parts of this life of theirs so full of activity : for either there follows no yield of solid benefit, or only that of a fleeting hour, while the storm in the heavens is at a lull, whereas « the prayer of him that humbleth himself » ¹ calls down without fail the most fruitful return.

And here We cannot but vehemently grieve for those who, carried away by pernicious novelties, are not afraid to think the opposite to these teachings, and who deem that labour spent in meditation and prayer is, as it were, lost. Alas for such miserable blindness !

¹ Eccles. XXXV. 21.

quem sane devocat uberrimum *oratio humiliantis se* ¹.

Quo loco facere quidem non possumus quin eos vehementer doleamus, qui pestiferis novitatibus abrepti, contra hæc sentire non vereantur, impensamque meditando et precando operam quasi perditam arbitrentur. Proh funesta cæcitas !

Utinam, secum ipsi probe considerantes, aliquando cognoscerent quorsum evadat neglectus iste contemptusque orandi.

Ex eo nimirum germinavit superbia et contumacia ; unde nimis amari excrevere fructus, quos paternus animus et commemorare refugit et omnino resecare exoptat.

Optatis annuat Deus ; qui benigne devios respiciens, tantâ in eos copia *spiritum gratiae et precum* effundat,

¹ Eccli. XXXV, 21.

Would that, deeply considering the matter for themselves, they might sometime know whither tend this neglect and contempt of prayer. From it have sprung pride and contumacy, and on these trees have grown those bitter fruits which Our paternal mind shudders to think of, and desires altogether to cut off. May God favour our desires ; and looking down in His mercy upon those who have gone astray, may He pour forth upon them in such abundance the « spirit of grace and of prayer » that, turning aside from their error, they may willingly seek again, to our common joy, the paths they have so foolishly deserted, and walk in them henceforth with more careful footsteps. Again for Us, as of old for the Apostle, God is Our witness how We long after them all in the bowels of Jesus Christ !¹

Into their hearts, then, and into ail your hearts,

¹ Philipp. I. 8.

ut errorem deflentes suum, male desertas vias communium gaudio volentes repetant, cautioresequantur. Item ut olim Apostolo ¹, ipse Deus sit Nobis testis, quo modo eos omnes cupiamus in visceribus Jesu Christi !

Illis igitur vobisque omnibus, dilecti filii, alte insideat hortatio Nostra, quæ Christi Domini est : *Videte, vigilate, et orate* ². Præcipue in pie meditandi studio uniuscujusque elaboret industria : elaboret simul animi fiducia, identidem rogantis : *Domine, doce nos orare* ³.

Nec parvi quidem momenti esse nobis ad meditandum debet peculiaris quædam causa ; scilicet quam magna vis consilii virtutisque inde profluat, bene utilis

¹ Philipp. I, 8.

² Marc. XIII, 33.

³ Luc. XI, 1.

beloved Sons, may Our exhortation sink deep, which is that of Christ our Lord : « Take ye heed, watch and pray » ¹. Labour each of you with industry especially in the exercise of pious meditation ; labour with confidence of spirit, while at the same time you ask, « Lord, teach us to pray » ². Nor ought we to deem of small moment this peculiar cause that urges us to meditation, namely, the great abundance of counsel and of virtue that flows from it, so very useful for that work the most difficult of all, the right care of souls. Apposite to this matter and worthy of remembrance is the pastoral charge of St. Charles : « Understand, brethren, that nothing is so necessary for all men in the ecclesiastical state as mental prayer, preceding, accompanying, and following all our actions : « I will

¹ Tark XIII. 33.

² Luke XI. 1.

ad rectam animarum curam, opus omnium perdifficile.

Cum re cohæret, et est memoratu dignum, Sancti Caroli pastorale alloquium : « Intelligite, fratres, nil
 « æque ecclesiasticis omnibus viris esse necessarium
 « ac est oratio mentalis, actiones nostras omnes præ-
 « cedens, concomitans et subsequens ; *Psallam*, inquit
 « propheta, *et intelligam* ¹. Si Sacramenta ministras,
 « o frater, meditare quid facis ; si Missam celebras,
 « meditare quid offers ; si psallis, meditare cui et
 « quid loqueris ; si animas regis, meditare quonam
 « sanguine sint lavatæ » ².

Quapropter recte ac jure Ecclesia nos ea davidica
 sensa iterare frequentes jubet : *Beatus vir, qui in lege*

¹ Ps. C. 2.

² Ex orationib. ad clerum.

sing » says the prophet, « and I will understand » ¹.
 If you administer the sacraments, O brother, meditate
 what it is you do ; if you celebrate Mass, meditate
 what it is you offer : if you recite the psalms, medi-
 tate to whom it is you speak and what it is you say :
 if you direct souls meditate on the blood by which they
 have been cleansed. » ² Therefore, rightly and justly
 does the Church command us frequently to repeat
 these thoughts from David : « Blessed is the man who
 meditates on the law of the Lord ; his will remaineth
 day and night ; all whatsoever he shall do shall ever
 prosper. » In fine, let one noble incentive take the
 place of all. If the priest is called and is *another*
Christ by participating in His power, ought he not to
 become and to be held the same also by imitating

¹ Ps. C. 2.

² Ex orationib. ad clerum.

Domini meditatur ; voluntas ejus permanet die ac nocte ; omnia quaecumque faciet semper prosperabuntur.

Ad hæc, unum denique instar omnium sit nobile incitamentum. Sacerdos enim, si *alter Christus* vocatur et est communicatione potestatis, nonne talis omnino et fieri et haberi debeat etiam imitatione factorum ?... *Summum igitur studium nostrum sit in vita Jesu Christi meditari* ¹.

B. Pia lectio.

Cum divinarum rerum quotidiana consideratione magni refert ut sacerdos piorum librorum lectionem, eorum in primis qui divinitus inspirati sunt, conjungat assiduus.

¹ De Imit. Chr. I, 1.

His works ? « ... Let it, then, be our chief study to meditate on the life of Jesus Christ » ¹.

B. Spiritual Reading.

With daily meditation on sacred things it is of great importance that the priest should carefully unite the reading of pious books, especially of those which are divinely inspired. Such was Paul's command to Timothy : « Attend unto reading » ². On this also did St. Jerome insist when instructing Nepotianus on the sacerdotal life : « Never let sacred reading out of your hands » ; adding the reason : « Learn that which you may teach ; acquire that faithful word which is according to doctrine, that you may be able to exhort in sound doctrine,

¹ *Imitation of Christ*, I. 1.

² Tim. IV. 13.

Sic Paulus mandabat Timotheo : *Attende lectioni* ¹. Sic Hieronymus, Nepotianum de vita sacerdotali instituens, id inculcabat : *Nunquam de manibus tuis sacra lectio deponatur* : cujus rei hanc subtexebat causam : *Disce quod doceas : obtine eum, qui secundum doctrinam est, fidelem sermonem, ut possis exhortari in doctrina sana, et contradicentes revincere*. Quantum enimvero proficiunt sacerdotes qui constanti hoc præstant assuetudine ; ut sapide prædicant Christum, utque mentes animosque audientium, potius quam emolliant et mulceant, ad meliora impellunt, ad superna erigunt desideria !

Sed alia quoque de causa, atque eâ in rem vestram,

¹ I Tim. IV, 13.

and to convince the gainsayers ». How great is the progress those priests make who maintain this exercise with constant custom ! with what savour do they preach Christ ! and how do they, instead of enervating and diverting the minds and hearts of their hearers, incite them to better things, and elevate them to celestial desires ! For another reason also, and in your case, beloved Sons, a fruitful one, does the precept of St. Jerome, hold good : « Let sacred reading be ever in your hands » ¹. Who does not know the very great influence on the mind of a friend that some friend possesses who may candidly advise, aid with his counsel, rebuke, encourage, recall from error ? « Blessed is he that findeth a true friend » ². He that hath found him,

¹ Ep. LVIII., *ad Paulinum*, n. 6.

² Eccles. XXV. 12.

dilecti filii, frugifera, præceptio valet ejusdem Hieronymi: *Semper in manu tua sacra sit lectio* ¹.

Quis enim nesciat maximum esse in amici animum vim cujuspiam amici qui candide moneat, consilio juvet, carpat, excitet, ab errore avocet ? *Beatus, qui invenit amicum verum* ²... *qui autem invenit illum, invenit thesaurum* ³. Jamvero amicos vere fideles adscribere ipsi nobis pios libros debemus. De nostris quippe officiis ac de præscriptis legitimæ disciplinæ graviter commonefaciunt ; repressas in animo cælestes voces suscitant ; desidiam propositorum castigant ; dolosam obturbant

¹ Ep. LVIII ad Paulinum, n. 6.

² Eccli. XXV, 12.

³ Ib., VI, 14.

hath found a treasure » ¹. Now we must reckon pious books as our truly faithful friends. They forcibly remind us of the precepts of authoritative discipline ; they awaken the still small voices of heaven in the soul ; they rebuke the falling away from resolutions ; they disturb deceitful calm ; they expose improper simple-seeming affections ; they reveal the dangers that lie in such numbers in the paths of the unwary. They do all this with such unobtrusive benevolence, that they show themselves not only our friends, but the very best of friends. We have them when it pleases us by our side, ever ready to assist us in our secret needs : their voice is never bitter, their counsel never partial, their utterance never fainthearted or deceptive.

Many notable examples show forth the very wholesome influence of pious books ; standing out most pro-

¹ Eccles. VI. 14.

tranquillitatem ; minus probabiles affectiones, dissimulatas, coarguunt ; pericula detegunt, sæpenumero incautis patentia. Hæc autem omnia sic illi tacita cum benevolentia præstant, ut se nobis non modo amicos præbeant, sed amicorum perquam optimos præbeant. Siquidem habemus, quum libeat, quasi lateri adhærentes, intimis necessitatibus nullâ non hora promptos ; quorum vox nunquam est acerba, consilium nunquam cupidum, sermo nunquam timidus aut mendax.

Librorum piorum saluberrimam efficacitatem multa quidem eaque insignia declarant exempla ; at exemplum profecto eminet Augustini, cujus promerita in Ecclesiam amplissima inde auspiciu duxerunt : *Tolle, lege ; tolle lege.... Arripui* (epistolas Pauli apostoli), *aperui et legi*

minently is that of St. Augustine, whose most glorious merits in the Church thence took their origin : « Take and read ; take and read... I caught up (the Epistles of the Apostle St. Paul) I opened and I read in silence... As if the light of certainty had been poured in upon my heart, the shades of all hesitation fled » ¹. But, on the other hand, alas ! too often does it happen in our age that clerics imperceptibly are overcome by the shadows of doubt, and follow after the decadent things of the world, for this reason especially, because they prefer to pious and to the divinely inspired books others of every kind, and a rabble journalism welling up with seductive error and corruption. Have a care for yourselves, beloved Sons ; trust not to mature or to advanced age ; allow not yourselves to be deluded by

¹ *Confess.*, lib. VIII. c. 12.

in silentio... Quasi luce securitatis infusa cordi meo. omnis dubitationis tenebræ diffugerunt ¹.

Sed contra heu ! sæpius accidit nostra ætate, ut homines e clero tenebris dubitationis sensim offundantur et sæculi obliqua sectentur, eo præsertim quod piis divinisque libris longe alios omne genus atque ephemeridum turbam præoptent, ea quidem scatentia errore blando ac lue. Vobis, dilecti filii, cavete : adultæ provectæque ætati ne fidite, neve sinite spe fraudulenta illudi, ita vos posse aptius communi bono prospicere. Certi custodiantur fines, tum quos Ecclesiæ leges præstituant, tum quos prudentia cernat et caritas sui : nam venena istæc semel quis animo imbiberit, concepti exitii perraro quidem effugiet damna.

¹ Conf. L. VIII, c. 12.

the fraudulent expectation that you can thus more fitly provide for the common good. Let the fixed limits be carefully guarded, those which the laws of the Church appoint and those which prudence and charity to oneself decree ; for once this poison has been taken into the heart, very rarely indeed will the victim escape the damage of the injury he has thus received.

C. Examen of Conscience.

Moreover, the advantages derived both from sacred reading and from meditation on heavenly things will of a certainty be more abundant for the priest if some test be applied by which he may know whether he is striving to practise in his daily life what he has read and meditated upon. Quite to the purpose is the excellent instruction of Chrysostom, intended, too, especially for the priest. Every night, before sleep approaches,

C. Examen conscientiae.

Porro emolumenta, tum a sacra lectione, tum ex ipsa meditatione cælestium quæsita, futura certe sunt sacerdoti uberiora, si argumenti quidpiam accesserit, unde ipsemet dignoscat an lecta et meditata religiose studeat in usu vitæ perficere.

Est apposite ad rem egregium quoddam documentum Chrysostomi, sacerdoti præsertim exhibitum. Quotidie sub noctem, antequam somnus obrepit, *excita iudicium conscientiae tuæ, ab ipsa rationem exige, et quæ interdum mala cepisti consilia.... fodica et dilania, et de eis pœnam sume* ¹.

Quam rectum id sit ac fructuosum christianæ virtuti,

¹ Exposit. in Ps. IV, n. 8.

« call forth the judgment of your conscience ; exact an account from it ; search deep and take to pieces the evil counsels you have followed during the day... and inflict a penalty for them » ¹. How good this practice is and how conducive to Christian virtue the more prudent teachers [of piety clearly prove by the best counsels and exhortations. We may point to that excellent example from the teaching of St. Bernard : « As a diligent sifter of thine own virtue examine thy life in the daily revision. Observe carefully what advance thou mayest have made, or what retrogression... Endeavour to know thyself... Place all thy transgressions before thine eyes. Set thee up before thyself as if before another ; and then bewail thyself » ².

¹ Exposit. in Ps. IV, n. 8.

² *Meditationes piissimæ*, c. V. de quotid. sui ipsius exam.

prudentiores pietatis magistri luculenter evincunt, optimis quidem monitis et hortamentis. Præclarum illud referre placet e disciplina Sancti Bernardi : *Integritatis tuæ curiosus explorator, vitam tuam in quotidiana discussione examina. Attende diligenter quantum proficias, vel quantum deficias... Stude cognoscere te... Pone omnes transgressiones tuas ante oculos tuos Statue te ante te, tamquam ante alium ; et sic te ipsum plange* ¹.

Etiam in hac parte probrosum vere sit, si Christi dictum eveniat : *Filii hujus sæculi prudentiores filiis lucis* ² ! Videre licet quanta illi sedulitate sua negotia procurent : quam sæpe data et accepta conferant ; quam

¹ Meditationes piissimæ, c. V. De quotid. sui ipsius exam.

² Luc. XVI, 8.

In this matter, too, what a reproach it will surely be if the words of Christ happen to be fulfilled : « The children of this world are wiser than the children of light » ¹. We can see with what earnestness they look after their affairs ; how they compare their expenditure and receipts ; with what accuracy and strictness they audit their accounts ; how they are grieved for losses sustained and with what redoubled energy they exert themselves to make them good. But we, whose minds perhaps are on fire with eagerness to capture honours, to increase our property, to acquire by the help of learning public reputation and glory, treat the most important and most difficult business, the attainment of sanctity, with listlessness and contempt. For hardly

¹ Luke XVI, 8.

accurate restricteque rationes subducant ; jacturas factas ut doleant, seque ipsi acrius excitent ad sarcindas. Nos vero, quibus fortasse ardet animus ad aucupandos honores, ad rem familiarem augendam, ad captandam præsidio scientiæ prædicationem unice et gloriam ; negotium maximum idemque perarduum, sanctimoniam videlicet adeptionem, languentes, fastidiosi tractamus. Nam vix interdum apud nos colligimus et exploramus animum ; qui propterea pæne silvescit, non secus ac vinea pigri, de qua scriptum : *Per agrum hominis pigri transivi, et per vineam viri stulti : et ecce totum repleverant urticae, et operuerant superficiem ejus spinæ, et maceria lapidum destructa erat* ¹.

Ingravescit res, crebrescentibus circum exemplis pra-

¹ Prov. XXIV, 30, 31.

ever do we consider with ourselves and search our hearts ; and hence they almost run wild like the vineyard of the slothful man, of which it is written : « I passed by the field of the slothful man, and by the vineyard of the foolish man ; and behold it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down » ¹. The matter grows more serious as evil examples are multiplying all around, most injurious to sacerdotal virtue ; so that there is need to walk each day more cautiously and to strive with greater energy. Now, it is well known by experience that he who goes through frequent and severe self-judgment of his thoughts, words, deeds, is stronger in spirit to hate and avoid evil, to pursue and love good.

¹ Prov. XXIV. 30. 31.

vis, sacerdotali ipsi virtuti haud minime infestis ; ut opus sit vigilantius quotidie incedere ac vehementius obniti. Jam experiendo cognitum est, qui frequentem in se censuram et severam de cogitatis, de dictis, de factis peragat, eum plus valere animo, simul ad odium et fugam mali, simul ad studium et ardorem boni.

Neque minus experiendo compertum, quæ incommoda et damna fere accidant declinanti tribunal illud, ubi sedeat judicans justitia, stet rea et ipsum accusans conscientia. In ipso frustra quidem desideres eam agendi circumspectionem, quæ adeo in christiano homine probatur, de minoribus quoque noxis vitandis ; eamque verecundiam animi, maxime sacerdotis propriam, ad omnem vel levissimam in Deum offensam expavescentis. Quin immo indiligentia atque neglectus sui nonnunquam eo

Nor is it less ascertained by experience what detriment and loss are wont to befall him who turns away from that tribunal, where justice sits in judgment, and conscience is both accuser and accused. In him you will seek in vain for that circumspect procedure so commendable in a Christian man which shuns even venial faults ; and for that modesty of soul most proper for the priest which shudders at the lightest offence against God. Nay more, his heedlessness and self-neglect sometimes decline to such a level that he omits the very sacrament of penance, that aid to human weakness above all others the most opportune that Christ has bestowed on us so liberally in His signal mercy. Unhappily it may not be denied, it is even bitterly to be deplored, that it not infrequently happens that he who deters others from sin by the thunderbolt

deterius procedit, ut ipsum negligent pœnitentiæ sacramentum : quo nihil sane opportunius infirmitati humanæ suppeditavit Christus insigni miseratione.

Diffitendum certe non est, acerbeque est deplorandum, non ita raro contingere, ut qui alios a peccando fulminea sacri eloquii vi deterret, nihil tale metuat sibi culpisque obcallescat ; qui alios hortatur et incitat ut labes animi ne morentur debita religione detergere, id ipse tam ignave faciat atque etiam diuturno mensium spatio cunctetur ; qui aliorum vulneribus oleum et vinum salutare novit infundere, saucius ipse secus viam jaceat, nec medicam fratris manum, eamque fere proximam, providus sibi requirat. Heu quæ passim consecuta sunt hodieque consequuntur, prorsus indigna coram Deo et Ecclesia, perniciose christianæ multitudini, indecora sacerdotali ordini !

of sacred eloquence, has no such fears for himself, and grows callous to his faults ; while he exhorts others and urges them to make no delay to cleanse the stains from their souls by the due religious exercise of penance, he himself acts as slothfully and even delays for a long space of months ; he who can pour healing oil and wine into the wounds of others, falls himself wounded by the way nor prudently seeks for himself the hand of a brother physician though within easy call. Alas, what results have arisen far and wide, and are to-day ensuing, utterly shameful before God and the Church, ruinous to the Christian people, disgraceful to the priestly order !

Excitat Pontifex clerum ad adhibenda
ista sanctificationis media hoc præsertim tempore.

Hæc Nos, dilecti filii, pro conscientiæ officio quum reputamus, oppletur animus ægritudine, et vox cum gemitu erumpit : Væ sacerdoti, qui suum tenere locum nesciat, et nomen Dei sancti, cui esse sanctus debet, infideliter polluat !

Optimorum corruptio, teterrimum : *Grandis dignitas sacerdotum, sed grandis ruina eorum, si peccant ; late-mur ad ascensum, sed timeamus ad lapsum : non est tanti gaudii excelsa tenuisse, quanti mæroris, de subli-mioribus corruisse* ¹

¹ S. Hieron. in Ezech., L. XIII, c. 44, v. 30.

The Pope implores the Clergy to use these
Means of Sanctifications,
especially at the present day.

When we consider these things, beloved Sons, as Our consience obliges us to do, Our soul is filled with grief, and Our voice breaks forth with lamentation : Woe to the priest who knows not how to hold his place, and who in his want of faith dishonours the name of the holy God, for whose sake he is bound to be holy. The corruption of the excellent is most loathsome. « Great is the dignity of priests, but great is their ruin if they sin ; let us rejoice at the elevation, but tremble at the fall ; there is no such joy in having held the eminence as there is sorrow in being overthrown from the heights » ¹. Woe then to the

¹ St. Jerome in Ezechiel, lib. XIII. c. 44, V. 30.

Væ igitur sacerdoti, qui, immemor sui, precandi studium deserit; qui piarum lectionum pabulum respuit; qui ad se ipse nunquam regreditur ut accusantis conscientiae exaudiat voces! Neque crudescentia animi vulnera, neque Ecclesiae matris ploratus movebunt miserum, donec eae feriant terribiles minae: *Excæca cor populi hujus, et aures ejus aggrava: et oculos ejus claude: ne forte videat oculis suis, et auribus suis audiat, et corde suo intelligat, et convertatur, et sanem eum*¹.

Triste omen, ab unoquoque vestrum, dilecti filii, avertat dives in misericordia, Deus; ipse, qui Nostrum intuetur cor, nulla prorsus in quemquam amaritudine affectum, sed omni pastoris et patris caritate in omnes

¹ Is. VI, 10.

priest, who, unmindful of himself, forsakes the practice of earnest prayer; who rejects the food of pious reading; who never retires into himself to hearken to the voices of accusing conscience! Neither the gangrened wounds of his soul nor the tears of his mother the Church will move the wretched man until these terrible denunciations smite him: « Blind the hearts of this people, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears and understand with their heart, and be converted and I hear them »¹. May God, Who is rich in mercy, avert the unhappy omen from each of you, beloved Sons; He who reads Our inmost heart sees that it is utterly untouched with bitterness, but that it is stirred with all the love of a pastor and father

¹ Isaias VI. 10.

permotum : *Quæ est enim nostra spes, aut gaudium, aut corona gloriæ ? nonne vos ante Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum* ¹ ?

Ad videtis ipsi, quotquot ubique estis, quænam in tempora, arcano Dei consilio, Ecclesia inciderit. Videte pariter et meditamini quam sanctum officium vos teneat, ut a qua, tanto dignitatis honore donati estis, eidem contendatis adesse et succurrere laboranti. Itaque in clero, si unquam alias, nunc, opus maxime est, virtute non mediocri; in exemplum integra, experfecta, operosa, paratissima demum facere pro Christo et pati fortia, Neque aliud quidquam est quod cupidior Nos animo precemur et optemus vobis, singulis et universis.

¹ I Thess. II, 19.

towards all : « For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glory ? Are not you, in the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ » ¹ ?

You, yourselves, scattered throughout the world, see upon what times in the secret purpose of God the Church has fallen. See also and consider how sacred the obligation that binds you to do your utmost to help and succour that same mother by whom you have been endowed with such honour and dignity. Therefore, if ever at any time there has been especial need of signal virtue in the clergy, there is such need now for an example of virtue that is irreproachable, vigilant, industrious, in eager readiness to do and suffer valiantly for Christ. Nor is there any other blessing that we pray for and desire for you individually

¹ I. Thess. II. 19.

In vobis igitur intemerato semper honore floreat castimonia, nostri ordinis lectissimum ornamentum ; cujus nitore sacerdos, ut adsimilis efficitur angelis, sic in christiana plebe venerabilior præstat sanctisque fructibus fecundior.

Vigeat perpetuis auctibus, reverentia et obedientia, iis, sollemni ritu promissa, quos divinus Spiritus, rectores constituit Ecclesiæ : præcipue, in obsequio huic Sedi Apostolicæ justissime debito, mentes animique, arctioribus quotidie fidelitatis nexibus devinciantur.

Excellatque in omnibus caritas, nullo modo quærens quæ sua sunt : ut, stimulis qui humanitus urgent invidiæ contentionis cupidæve ambitionis cohibitis, vestra omnium studia, ad incrementa divinæ gloriæ, fraterna æmulatione conspirent. Vestræ beneficia, caritatis *multi-*

and collectively with more ardent longing. May, therefore, chastity, the choicest ornament of our order, flourish ever amongst you with unsullied honour : as by its splendour the priest is made like unto the angels, so amongst the Christian people he stands out more worthy of respect and more prolific in holy fruits. May reverence and obedience, promised by you in solemn rite to those whom the Holy Spirit has appointed rulers in the Church, grow amongst you with perpetual increase ; and especially may your hearts and minds be daily engaged by closer bonds of fidelity in just allegiance to this Apostolic See. May charity, that seeketh not her own, be eminent in all ; so that restraining the incitements which in human conditions goad to envious contention and greedy ambition, all your efforts may blend harmoniously in the rivalry of brothers for the increase of the glory of

tudo magna languentium, cæcorum, claudorum, aridorum, quam miserrima, expectat; vel maxime expectans densi adolescentum greges, civitatis et religionis spes carissima, fallaciis undique cincti et corruptelis. Studete alacres, non modo sacra catechesi impertienda, quod rursus enixiusque commendamus, sed, omni quacumque liceat ope consilii et sollertiæ, bene optimeque mereri de omnibus. Sublevando, tutando, medendo, pacificando, hoc demum velitis ac propemodum sitiatis, lucrari vel obstringere animas Christo. Ab inimicis ejus heu quam impigre, quam laboriose, quam non trepide agitur, instatur exitio animarum immenso !

Ob hanc potissime caritatis laudem Ecclesia catholica gaudet et gloriatur in clero suo, christianam pacem evangelizante, salutem atque humanitatem afferente, ad gen-

God. A great multitude of sick, of blind, of lame, of withered, a most pitiable throng, await the benefits of your charity : most anxiously expectant are the unnumbered bands of youth, the dearest hope of state and of religion, who are girt around on all sides by deceit and seduction. With all activity, then, endeavour not only by imparting religious instruction, which We again most earnestly commend, but by every legitimate aid of counsel and ingenuity to deserve well, nay, excellently, of all. By raising up the fallen, by guarding innocence, by healing, by peacemaking — thus, in fine, you may desire, and even thirst, to gain or to bind souls to Christ.

Alas ! with what energy and undaunted industry do His enemies labour and press onward, to the immeasurable ruin of souls ! Most of all, indeed, for the renown of their charity, does the Catholic Church

tes usque barbaras: ubi ex magnis ejus laboribus, profuso nonnunquam sanguine consecratis, Christi regnum latius in dies profertur, et fides sancta enitet novis palmis augustior.

Quod si, dilecti filii, effusæ caritatis vestræ officiis simultas, convicium, calumnia, ut persæpe fit, responderit, nolite ideo tristitiæ succumbere, *nolite deficere benefacientes* ¹. Ante oculos obversentur illorum agmina, numero meritisque insignia, qui per Apostolorum exempla, in contumeliis pro Christi nomine asperrimis, *ibant gaudentes, maledicti benedicebant*. Nempe filii sumus fratresque Sanctorum, quorum nomina splendent in libro

¹ II Thess. 13.

rejoice and exult in her clergy, who bear the good tidings of Christian peace, salvation and refinement even to the barbarous nations. Owing to their great labours, often consecrated by the outpouring of their blood, the kingdom of Christ is daily being extended more widely amongst these, and the holy faith shines forth rendered more venerable by new victories. But if, beloved Sons, in return for the exercise of your abundant charity you receive, as often happens, hatred, insult, calumny, yield not, therefore, to dejection, « be not weary in well doing » ¹. Let those bands of heroes pass before your gaze, glorious in their numbers and in merits, who, following the example of the Apostles, amidst the rudest affronts went their way rejoicing, and when reviled, returned blessings. For we, in truth, are the sons and brothers of Saints, whose

¹ 2 Thess. III. 13.

vitæ, quorum laudes nuntiat Ecclesia : *Non inferamus crimen gloriæ nostræ* ¹ !

III. QUAEDAM SUBSIDIA AD SERVANDAM SANCTITATEM.

Instaurato et aucto in ordinibus cleri spiritu gratiæ sacerdotalis, multo quidem efficacius valebunt Nostra, Deo adspirante, proposita ad cetera, quæcumque late sunt, instauranda. Quapropter ad ea quæ supra exposuimus, certa quædam adjicere visum est, tamquam subsidia eidem gratiæ custodiendæ et alendæ opportuna.

¹ I Mach. IX, 10.

names are written in glowing letters in the book of life, whose praises the Church proclaims : « Let us not stain our glory ! » ¹

III. AIDS TO THE PRESERVATION OF SANCTITY.

When the spirit of sacerdotal grace is renewed and increased in the ranks of the clergy, with much more efficacy shall the other renovations that, with God's assistance, We hope to accomplish be carried onward. Therefore, in addition to the exercises which We have already explained, it seems good to Us to recommend certain others, as suitable helps to preserve and foster you in grace.

¹ I Macchab. IX. 10.

A. Recessus annuus.

Est primum, quod nemini sane non cognitum et probatum, sed non item omnibus re ipsa exploratum est, pius animæ recessus ad Exercitia, quæ vocant, spiritualia ; annuus, si fieri possit, vel apud se singulatim, vel potius unâ cum aliis, unde largior esse fructus consuevit ; salvis Episcoporum præscriptis. Hujus instituti utilitates jam Ipsi satis laudavimus, quum nonnulla in eodem genere ad cleri romani disciplinam pertinentia ediximus ¹.

B. Recollectio menstrua.

Nec minus deinde proficiet animis, si consimilis

¹ Ep. *Experiendo* ad Card. in Urbe Vicarium, 27 dec. 1904.

A. Annual Retreat.

First, the pious retreat of the soul for the spiritual exercises as they are called ; this is well known and approved by all, although not practised by all in the same manner : let this be made annually, if possible, either alone or more fruitfully with others, according to the direction of the Bishops. We, Ourselves, have already proclaimed Our sense of the advantages of this practice, seeing that We have made certain regulations in this matter for the discipline of the Roman clergy.

B. Monthly Recollection.

Nor will it be of slight benefit to souls if a similar retreat be entered upon monthly just for a few hours, privately or in common : We are glad to see that this custom has already been introduced in several places,

recessus, ad paucas horas, menstruus, vel privatim vel communiter habeatur : quem morem libentes videmus pluribus jam locis inductum, ipsis Episcopis faventibus, atque interdum præsidentibus cœtui.

C. Sacerdotum associationes.

Aliud præterea cordi est commendare ; adstrictiorem quandam sacerdotum, ut fratres addecet, inter se conjunctionem, quam episcopalis auctoritas firmet ac moderetur. Id sane commendabile, quod in societatem coalescant ad mutuam opem in adversis parandam, ad nominis et munerum integritatem contra hostiles astus tuendam, ad alias istiusmodi causas.

At pluris profecto interest, consociationem eos inire ad facultatem doctrinæ sacræ excolendam, in primisque

under favour of the Bishops, who sometimes themselves preside at the meetings.

C. Clerical Associations.

One other recommendation We make from the heart, that priests should form, as it becomes brothers, a closer union among themselves, which the episcopal authority may confirm and direct. It is surely praiseworthy that they should form an association for rendering mutual aid in adversity, for the protection of the honour of their name and office against the craft of enemies, and for other causes of a similar kind. But it is assuredly of much more importance that they should enter into an association of the perfection of their knowledge of sacred learning, and chiefly for the more zealous support of the holy purpose of their vocation, for the promotion of the

ad sanctum vocationis propositum impensiore cura retinendum, ad animarum provehendas rationes, consiliis viribusque collatis. Testantur Ecclesiæ annales, quibus temporibus sacerdotes passim in communem quamdam vitam conveniebant, quam bonis fructibus id genus societas abundarit. Tale aliquid quidni in hanc ipsam ætatem, congruenter quidem locis et muniis, revocari queat ? pristini etiam fructus, in gaudium Ecclesiæ, nonne sint recte sperandi ?

Nec vero desunt instituti similis societates, sacrorum Antistitum comprobatione auctæ ; eo utiliores, quo quis maturius, sub ipsa sacerdotii initia, amplectatur. Nosmetipsi unam quamdam, bene aptam, experti, fovimus in episcopali munere ; eandem etiamnum aliasque singulari benevolentia prosequimur.

interests of their souls by united counsels and endeavours. The annals of the Church bear witness of the excellent fruits abounding from societies of this kind, in those times when priests in various places came together in a certain common life. Why may not some such custom be revived in this age, suitably, however, to the different places and duties ? May not the same good results as of old be hoped for, to the joy of the Church ? There are, indeed, in existence associations of this character endowed with the approval of the Bishops ; they are the more beneficial when the priest enters them early, at the very beginning of his ministry. We Ourselves fostered one such association during Our episcopate, having found it very useful : We regard it still and others of the same kind with special goodwill.

Do you, therefore, beloved Sons, esteem and make

Ista sacerdotalis gratiæ adjumenta, eaque item quæ vigil Episcoporum prudentia pro rerum opportunitate suggerat, vos, dilecti filii, sic æstimate, sic adhibete, ut magis in dies magisque *digne ambuletis vocatione qua vocati estis* ¹, ministerium vestrum honorificantes, et perficientes in vobis Dei voluntatem, quæ nempe est *sanctificatio vestra*.

Conclusio.

Huc enimvero feruntur præcipuæ cogitationes curæque Nostræ : propterea sublatis in cælum oculis, supplices Christi Domini voces super universum clerum frequenter iteramus : *Pater sancte... sanctifica eos* ². In qua pietate lætamur permultos ex omni fidelium ordine

¹ Ephes. IV, 1.

² Johan. XVII, 11. 17.

use of these helps to sacerdotal virtue, and those also which the watchful care of the Bishops may, according to circumstances, suggest, so that more and more you may « walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called » ¹, doing honour to your ministry, and reflecting in yourselves the will of God, which, indeed, is *your sanctification*.

Conclusion.

In the foregoing We have set forth Our special thoughts and cares : moved by them, with eyes raised to heaven We frequently repeat the suppliant prayers of Christ Our Lord for the whole body of the clergy : « Holy Father... sanctify them » ². We rejoice that We have very many from every order of the faithful join-

¹ Ephes. IV. 1.

² John XVII. 11. 17.

Nobiscum comprecantes habere, de communi vestro et Ecclesiæ bono vehementer sollicitos : quin etiam jucundum accidit, haud paucas esse generosioris virtutis animas, non solum in sacratis septis, sed in media ipsa sæculi consuetudine, quæ ob eandem causam sese victimas Deo votivas non intermissa contentione exhibeant. Puras eximiasque eorum preces in odorem suavitatis summus Deus accipiat, neque humillimas abnuat preces Nostras.

Faveat, exoramus, clemens idem et providus : atque e sanctissimo dilecti Filii sui Corde divitias gratiæ, caritatis, virtutis omnis universum in clerum largiatur.

Postremo, libet gratam ex animo vicem referre vobis, dilecti filii, de votis faustitatis quæ, appetente sacerdotii Nostri natali quinquagesimo, multiplici pietate obtulis-

ing with Us in that pious prayer, in their earnest solicitude for your common welfare and for that of the Church ; nay, more, this is a delightful fact that many souls of a nobler virtue, not only in the sacred enclosures but in the midst of the world, offer themselves with unremitting zeal as votive victims to God for the same holy cause. May the Most High God receive their pure and excellent prayers in the odour of sweetness, and may He not reject Our most humble petitions. May He be propitious in His clemency and Providence, We pray, and out of the Most Sacred Heart of His beloved Son may He bestow on the whole body of the clergy the abundance of grace, of charity, and of every virtue.

Finally, it gives Us pleasure to render from Our heart to you, beloved Sons, a grateful return for the good wishes and prayers for Our happiness which you have offered with exceeding piety on the approach of

tis : votaue pro vobis Nostra, pro cumulatus eveniant, magnæ Virgini Matri concredita volumus, Apostolorum Reginæ. Hæc etenim illas sacri ordinis felices primitias exemplo suo edocuit quemadmodum perseverarent unanimes in oratione, donec induerentur superna virtute ; eandemque ipsis virtutem multo sane ampliorem sua deprecatione impetravit, consilio auxit et communivit, ad fertilitatem laborum lætissimam.

Optamus interea, dilecti filii, ut pax Christi exultet in cordibus vestris cum gaudio Spiritus Sancti ; auspice Apostolica Benedictione, quam vobis omnibus peramanti voluntate impertimus.

Datum Romæ, apud Sanctum Petrum, die IV Augusti anno MCMVIII, Pontificatus Nostri ineunte sexto.

PIUS PP. X.

the fiftieth anniversary of Our priesthood. We entrust Our prayers on your behalf to the great Virgin Mother, the Queen of Apostles. For she taught by her example those blessed ones who were the first-born of the holy order how they should persevere with one mind in prayer until they were clothed with virtue from on high ; and, through her intercession she obtained for them a much larger measure of that same virtue, which she strengthened and secured by her counsel unto the most fruitful harvest of their labours. Meanwhile, we wish, beloved Sons, that the peace of Christ may exult in your hearts with the joy of the Holy Spirit ; as a presage of which We grant to all of you with all kindly affection the Apostolic Benediction.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, on the 4th day of August, 1908, in the beginning of the sixth year of Our Pontificate.

PIUS X, POPE.

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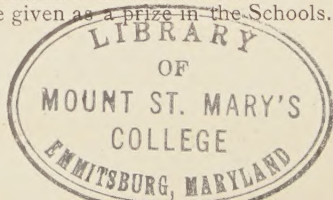
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